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THE

GAME-BIRDS

OF THE

COASTS AND LAKES OF THE NORTHERN STATES OF AMERICA.

A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE SPORTING ALONG OUR SEA-SHORES AND INLAND WATERS, WITH A COMPARISON OF THE MERITS OF BREECH-LOADERS AND MUZZLE-LOADERS.

BY ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT,

AUTHOR OF "THE GAME-FISH OF NORTH AMERICA," "SUPERIOR FISHING," "COUNTRY LIFE," ETC., ETC.

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THE NEW YORK PRINTING COMPANY,
81, 83, *and* 85 *Centre Street*,
NEW YORK.

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THE GAME BIRDS OF THE NORTH.

CHAPTER I.

GAME AND ITS PROTECTION.

By the ancient law of 1 and 2 William IV., chap. 32, under the designation of game, were included "hares, pheasants, partridges, grouse, heath or moor game, black game, and bustards."

Hunting and hawking date back to the earliest days of knight-errantry, when parties of cavaliers and ladies fair, mounted on their mettlesome steeds caparisoned with all the skill of the cunning artificers of those days, pursued certain birds of the air with the falcon, and followed the royal stag through the well preserved and extensive forests with packs of hounds. The term game, therefore, had an early significance and positive application, but was confined to the creatures pursued in one or the other of these two modes.

The gun was first used for the shooting of feathered game in the early part of the eighteenth century; it soon became the favorite implement of the sportsman, and was brought into use, not only against the

birds, but the beasts, of game. The huntsman no longer depends upon his brave dog and cloth-yard shaft, but upon his own powers of endurance and of marksmanship. Instead of watching the savage falcon strike his prey far up in the heavens, he follows his high-bred setters, till their wonderful natural instinct betrays to him the presence of the game.

Where he once rode after the yelping pack, sounding the merry notes of his bugle horn, he now climbs and crawls laboriously, until he brings the wary stag within range of the deadly rifle. No more brilliant parties of lovely dames and gallant men, chatting merrily on the incidents of the day, ride gaily decked steeds; no more the luxury of the beautiful faces and pleasant companionship of the gentler sex is to be enjoyed; the ladies of modern times—except in England, where they occasionally follow foxes, which are rather vermin than game—preferring the excitement of ball-room flirtations to outdoor sports and pleasures, take no part in the pursuits of the chase.

Together with the change in the mode of capturing game, comes a necessity for a change in its former restricted meaning. Who would think of not including among game birds, the gamest of them all—the magnificent woodcock; nor the stylish English snipe, nor even possibly the brave little quail—unless he can be scientifically proved to be a partridge—which is at least doubtful! Migratory birds were not included in the sacred list, and the quail in England, as the woodcock and snipe of both

England and America, are migratory, although the mere temporary character of their residence does not, in our view, at all alter the nature of their claims. The larger European woodcock is by no means so delicious or highly flavored a bird as our yellow-breasted, round-eyed beauty, and is much scarcer; while the foreign quail, on the other hand, is smaller than ours, and in southern Europe is found in vast flocks; but both are entitled to high rank among modern sportsmen.

The term Game Birds, therefore, should be, and has been by general consent, greatly extended in its application, and applied to all the numerous species which, whether migratory or not, are killed not alone for the market, but for sport; and which are followed on the stubble fields, in brown November, with the strong-limbed and keen-nosed setter, or shot from blind in scorching August; slain from battery in freezing December, or chased in a boat, or misled by decoys. All wild birds that furnish sport as well as profit are therefore game; and the gentle dowitchers along our sea-coast, lured to the deceitful stools, are as much entitled to the name as the stately ruffed grouse of our wild woods, or the royal turkey of the far west.

To constitute a legitimate object of true sport, the bird must be habitually shot on the wing, and the greater the skill required in its capture, the higher its rank. The turkey, therefore, although frequently killed on the wing, is more a game bird by sufferance than by right, and partly from his gastronomic

as well as from his other qualities. Under this classification, then, we must include, not merely the ruffed and pinnated grouse, which, although the only species in our country coming within the ancient definition, furnish far less sport than many other varieties, but woodcock, snipe, quail, geese, ducks, bay birds, plover, and rail; without regard to the fact that all, except the quail, are migratory, and most were unknown to our British ancestry. It has been even supposed that the quail, in parts of our country free from deep rivers and impassable barriers, are also in a measure migratory; but this has no other foundation than their habit of wandering from place to place in search of food, and collecting late in the season, as they will do where they are numerous and undisturbed in large packs.

To the protection of this vast variety of game it is the sportsman's duty to address himself, in spite of the opposition of the market-man and restaurateur, the mean-spirited poaching of the pot-hunter, and the lukewarmness of the farmer. The latter can be enlisted in the cause; he has indirectly the objects of the sportsman at heart; and with proper enlightenment will assist, not merely to preserve his fields from ruthless injury, but to save from destruction his friends the song-birds.

As the true sportsman turns his attention only to legitimate sport, destroying those birds that are but little if at all useful to the farmer; and as at the same time, out of gratitude for the kindness with which the latter generally receives him, he is care-

ful never to invade the high grass or the ripening grain—so also, from his innate love of nature, and of everything that makes nature more beautiful, he spares and defends the warblers of the woods and the innocent worm-devourers that stand guardian over the trees and crops. The smaller birds destroy immense numbers of worms; cedar-birds have been known to eat hundreds of caterpillars, and in this city have cleared the public squares in a morning's visit of the disgusting measuring-worms, that were hanging by thousands pendent from the branches. And who has not heard the "woodpecker tapping" all day long in pursuit of his prey?

With the barbarous and senseless destruction of our small birds, the ravages of the worms have augmented, until we hear from all the densely-settled portions of the country loud complaints of their attacks. Peach-trees perish; cherries are no longer the beautiful fruit they once were; apples are disfigured, and plums have almost ceased to exist. Worms appear upon every vegetable thing; the borers dig their way beneath the bark of the trunk and cut long alleys through the wood; weevils pierce the grain and eat out its pith; the leaf-eaters of various sorts punch out the delicate membrane by individual effort; or collecting in bodies, throw their nets, like a spider-web, over the branches, and by combined attacks deliberately devour every leaf. While these species are at work openly and in full sight, others are at the roots digging and destroying and multiplying; until the tree that at first

gave evidence of hardiness and promise of long utility to man, pauses in its growth, becomes delicate, fades, and finally dies.

The destruction of these vermicular pests is a question of life or death to the farmer. He may attempt it either with his own labor, by tarring his trees, fastening obstructions on the trunks, or by killing individuals; or he may have it done for him, free of expense, by innumerable flocks of the denizens of the air. The increase of worms must be stopped; the means of doing so is a question of serious public concern, and none have yet been invented so effectual as the natural course—the restoration of the equipoise of nature. It is true that the robin, as we call him, now and then steals a cherry, and has been blamed as though he were nothing more than a cherry-thief; but surely we can spare him a little fruit for his dessert, when we remember that his meal has been composed mainly of the deadly enemies of that very fruit! Swallows are accused of breeding lice, which, if true, would not be a serious charge, considering that their nests are generally in the loftiest and least accessible corner they can find; but when we consider how many millions of noxious flies and poisonous mosquitoes they destroy, how they hover over the swamps and meadows for this especial purpose, and how much annoyance their labors save to human kind, we owe them gratitude instead of abuse.

Every tribe of birds has its allotted part to play; and if destroyed, not only will its pleasant songs and

bright feathers, gleaming amid the green leaves, be missed, but some species of bug or insect, some disgusting caterpillar or injurious fly, will escape well merited destruction, and increasingly visit upon man the punishment of his cruelty and folly.

The beautiful blue-birds, the numerous woodpeckers, the tiny wrens, the graceful swallows and noisy martins, are sacred to the sportsman, and constitute one great division of the creatures that he desires to protect. It is true that enthusiastic foreigners, with cast-iron guns, are seen peering into trees and lurking through the woods, proud of a dirty bag half filled with robins, thrushes, and woodpeckers; but let no ignorant reader confound such persons with sportsmen. Their satisfaction in slaying one beautiful little warbler, as full of melody as it is bare of meat, with a deadly charge of No. 4 shot; or in chasing from tree to tree the agile red squirrel, who, with bushy tail erect, leaps from one limb to another, emulating the very birds themselves with his agility, is as unsportsmanlike as to kill a cheeping quail, that, struggling from the thick weeds in September before the pointer's nose, with feeble wings, skirts the low brush; or to murder the brooding woodcock, that flutters up before the dog in June, and, with holy maternal instinct, endeavours to lead the pursuer from her infant brood.

From such acts the veritable sportsman turns with horror; they are cruelty—the slaughter of what is useless for food, or what, by its death, will produce misery to others; and no persons in the

community have done more to repress this wantonness of destruction than the Sportsmen's Clubs. It was at their request that the killing of song-birds was prohibited altogether; and they are the most earnest to restrict the times of lawful sport to such periods as will not, by any possibility, permit its being followed during the season of incubation.

Not alone by obtaining the passage of appropriate laws and their vigorous enforcement, have these clubs effected a great reform; but by their personal example and social influence, often, too, at considerable loss to themselves. For while the poacher, taking the chance of a legal conviction as an accident of business, and but a slight reduction of his unlawful profits, anticipates the appointed time, true sportsmen, restrained by a feeling of honor and self-respect, although they know that the birds are being killed daily in defiance of the statute, wait till the lawful day arrives, and thus often, especially in woodcock shooting, sacrifice their entire season's sport for a principle.

This honorable spirit, if encouraged and extended, is the best protection for song-birds and game that can be had. The laws are only necessary to deter those who are dead to honor and decency, and to fix the proper times—which ought to be uniform throughout our entire country. But to enforce them requires the assistance of public opinion. Every encouragement should be given to sportsmen's associations. The absurd prejudice that has originated from confounding them with a very different class

of the community should be overcome, and their efforts to have good laws passed, and to make them effectual, should be sustained. The vulgar idea, that confounds laws for the protection of the wild creatures of wood, meadow, lake, and stream, with the monstrous game-laws of olden time—that made killing a hare more criminal than killing a man—should be corrected.

In this country, where every man is expected to be a sort of volunteer-policeman, all should unite in enforcing the laws; and then, in spite of the irrepressible obstinacy of the German enthusiast, and the mean cunning of the sneaking poacher, our cities would soon be rid of the disgusting worms that make their trees hideous, our farms protected from the devastations of the curculio, the weevil, the borer, and the army-worm; the country would once more be populated with its native feathered game, and our fields would resound with the glad songs of the little birds that there build their homes.

So long as the ignorant of our *nouveaux riches*, imagining themselves to be epicures, will pay for unseasonable game an extravagant price, so long will unscrupulous market-men purchase, and loafing, disreputable, tavern-haunting poachers shoot or otherwise kill their prey. It must be made a disgrace, and if necessary punished as a crime, for any modern Lucullus to insult his guests by presenting to them game out of season; and eating-house keepers should not only be taught—by persistent espionage, if ne-

cessary—that illegal profits will not equal legal punishments; but their customers should also discourage, by withdrawing their patronage, conduct that is so injurious to the public interests. Woodcock would not be shot in spring, nor quail in summer, unless the demand for them were sufficiently great to pay both the expense of capture and the danger of exposure; and, with a diminution of purchasers, will be an increased diminution of the number of birds improperly killed.

Birds and fish, except in their proper seasons, are always tasteless, and often unhealthy food. A setting quail or a spawning trout is absolutely unfit to eat, and to do without them is no sacrifice; but for the sportsman to restrain his ardor as the close-time draws towards an end, and when others less scrupulous are filling their bags daily, or when in the wilder sections of country there is no one to complain or object, requires the heroism of self-denial. Nevertheless, the effect of example should not be forgotten, and the duty of the true sportsman is clear and unmistakable: he must abide by the law; or, where there is no law, must govern himself by analogous rules.

In the wilderness, it is true, where birds are abundant to excess, he may without blame supply his pot with cheeping grouse or wood-duck flappers, if he can offer hunger as an excuse; but not even there, unless driven by extremity, can he slay the parent of a brood that will starve without parental care. In the settled regions, no matter how great

the provocation, the true sportsman will never forget the chivalric motto, *noblesse oblige.*

The close-times of the present statutes are not altogether correct; and in so extensive a locality as the United States, where diverse interests are to be considered, it is nearly impracticable to make the laws perfect. For instance, where quail are abundant, as in the South, there is no objection to killing them during the entire month of January; but, as at that period they are often lean and tough, and have to contend, in the Northern States, against dangers of the elements and rapacious vermin, with not too favorable a chance for life—it is undesirable, where they are in the least scarce, to continue the pursuit after December.

If it were possible to make a uniform law for the entire Union, and to enforce it everywhere, English snipe and ducks should not be killed at all during the spring. The latter at the time of their flight northward are poor and fishy; but if they can be slain in New Jersey, it is hardly worth while to protect them in New York. For every duck or snipe that passes towards the hatching-grounds of British America in the early part of the year, four or five return in the fall and winter. Could proper protection, therefore, be enforced, the sport in the latter season would be four times as great as in the former.

As matters stand, however, the seasons for killing game birds should be: For woodcock, from July fourth to December thirty-first; for ruffed and pin

nated grouse, from September first—and quail from November first—to the same period, both days inclusive; for wood-duck from August first till they migrate southward. It is desirable to fix upon anniversaries or days that are easily remembered. Woodcock are often young and weak in early summer, and the three days gained between the first and the fourth of July are quite an advantage. Although the first brood of quail may be fully grown in October, a vast number of the birds are too small, and the brush is too dense and thick before the first of the ensuing month; whereas it is simply monstrous to slay pinnated grouse, put up by the panting, overheated pointer from the high grass of the western prairie, in the month of August, ere they can half fly. But the migratory birds of the coast—the waterfowl and snipe, the waders and plovers—may continue to be shot when they can be found, till their rapidly diminishing numbers shall compel a more sensible and considerate treatment.

The bay-snipe lead the advancing army of the game birds that have sought the cool and secluded marshes of Hudson's Bay and the Northern Ocean to raise their young, and are hastening south from approaching cold and darkness to more congenial climes. Next come the beautiful wood-duck, and, almost simultaneously, the English snipe; then the swift but diminutive teal; after him the broad-bill or the blue-bill of the west; and then a host of other ducks, till the hardy canvas-backs and geese

bring up the rear. From July, when the yellow-legs and dowitchers abound; throughout August, in which month the larger bay-birds are continuously streaming by; during September, when the English snipe are on the meadows and the wood-ducks in the lily-pad marshes of the fresh-water lakes; in October, when the teal and blue-bills are abundant in the great west; all through the fall and into winter, when the geese and canvas-backs arrive, the bay-man finds his sport in perfection.

Many of the upland birds are disappearing; the quail is being killed with merciless energy, and his loved haunts of dense brush are cleared away from year to year; the woodcock can hardly rest in peace long enough to rear her young, and finds many of her favorite secluded spots drained by the enterprising farmer; the ruffed grouse disappears with the receding forest, and the prairie chicken with the cultivation of the open land. But although innumerable ducks, snipe, and plovers are killed every season, and by unjustifiable measures are driven from certain localities, their vast flights throughout the whole country—amounting to myriads in the west—are apparently as innumerable as ever.

From the first of August to the last of December they stretch athwart the sky from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and although in localities they may appear scarce, still constitute countless hosts. Were it possible to stand on some peak of the Rocky Mountains, and take in at a glance the vast stretch of heavens from ocean to ocean, with the moving

myriads of migratory flocks, the mind would be astonished; and it would seem impossible ever to reduce their numbers. This is to a certain degree true; for so long as the lagoons of the South shall remain undisturbed, and the shores of the bays and rivers unoccupied to any great extent, this abundance of the migratory birds will continue. But when the Southern shores shall be frequented with gunners as plenteously as those of Long Island and New Jersey, the last days of the bay-fowl will have arrived.

At present we suffer more from improper modes of pursuit than from absolute scarcity of game. The habit of using "batteries" in the South Bay of Long Island, and locating them on the feeding or sanding-grounds, has resulted in frightening away the birds. Where, a few years ago, ten ducks stopped in the water adjoining that famous sand-pit, there can hardly be found one at present. After being disturbed on their feeding-grounds by murderous discharges from an unseen foe in their midst, they become alarmed and leave the locality altogether. To be sure, for a year or so, the number killed from that ingenious mode of ambush will be enormous; but it is at a terrible sacrifice of the supply, and will eventuate in ruin to those engaged in it. At present on Long Island it is hardly possible to obtain a decent day's sport without using a "battery;" but in the South, along the Chesapeake and Potomac, where the use of these inventions has never been allowed, the ducks are as abundant as ever.

There is no meaner mode of shooting than from a battery. In attaining destructiveness, every idea of beauty, comfort, or sportsmanship is sacrificed. The shooter lies on his back in a species of coffin sunk to the level of the water, with his decoys near by; and whenever a flock approaches, he rises to a sitting posture and fires. He cannot leave his battery nor move it, nor hardly turn round in it, and is unable to retrieve his ducks without the aid of an assistant. It is an invention suited solely to the market-gunner, and utterly unfitted to the sportsman. Bad weather prevents its use altogether; and in a moderate breeze the water is apt to break over the narrow rim and destroy the comfort, if not absolutely endanger the safety, of the sportsman.

When ducks are scarce the confinement is wearisome; and when they are abundant the excitement, united to the awkwardness of position, often leads to terrible accidents. "Cribbed, cabined, and confined," the duck-shooter lies for weary hours exposed to the cold winds of winter, unable to keep his blood in circulation by exercise, and is hardly remunerated by the sport; although, if money be his object, he may be paid by the commercial value of his game. It is this ignoble mode of warfare that, more than anything else, has brought discredit upon wild-fowl shooting; for the upland shooter, accustomed to the free motion and active exertion of his favorite pursuit, naturally feels disgusted at being thrust into a box scarcely large enough to contain his body, and which cramps his every motion.

At the South, where the sportsman shoots from behind a blind, and calls to his aid the courage and intelligence of his faithful "retriever" to recover his game, the walk to and from the stand warms his blood, and he can move around at will. In the West, where duck-shooting is to be had in perfection, the sportsman pushes his light and narrow boat through the weeds and lilies of the marshes, and has many a long chase after wounded birds that will bring into play his muscles, and send the circulation through his veins. Even in shooting through the "sneak boxes" of Barnegat Bay, there is much exercise and a certain amount of liberty of motion; but in the battery, a man is a mere death-dealing machine, expected to mind neither cold nor cramp, and to demand neither comfort nor pleasure.

One of the most necessary reforms in the game-laws would be the absolute prohibition of the use of a battery. At the South this was done by the good sense of the people; and many a stranger from Long Island, who was unaware of the customs of the country, and had brought with him his battery to teach the natives "New York tricks," has been warned to move his quarters by the whistle of a rifle-ball skipping across the water. It is surprising that the gunners of the great South Bay did not long ago discover that their interest lay in discontinuing the use of this machine. For the first few years, perhaps, after its prohibition, they might not have as good success; but in time the birds would resume their old habits and renew their

visits to what should be the paradise of both ducks and sportsmen. They all know and regret the diminution of wild fowl, and most of them are satisfied from what cause it arises; but as the immediate losses from a change would fall upon themselves heavily at first, they shrink from decided action.

If, however, the birds are to be retained, and prevented from gradually withdrawing, year after year, until they shall desert us *in toto*, the use of the battery must be prevented. When that is done, we shall soon again have such days as we once had in and about old Raccoon Beach, when sportsmen innumerable collected to welcome the advent of their prey; when the tale and song filled up the long evenings, and the ducks quacked their hosannas at early dawn; when every point was occupied by a happy sportsman, and every boat came home loaded with game.

The use of pivot-guns is another reprehensible practice that has been so earnestly condemned, even among market-gunners, that it has been in a great measure abandoned. Still, however, in some quiet bay of one of the great lakes of the West, where there is no one to observe the iniquity, or of a moonlight night on the Chesapeake, the poaching murderer, sculling his boat down upon an unsuspicious flock crowded together and feeding or asleep, will discharge a pound or two of coarse shot from his diminutive cannon; and wounding hundreds, will kill scores of ducks at the one fatal discharge. The noise, however, reverberating over land and water, scatters the tidings of the guilty act far and wide;

and often brings upon the criminal detection and punishment. To avoid this the pivot-shooter will sometimes, as soon as he has fired, throw his gun overboard with a buoy attached to it, and if pursued, pretend he has used nothing but his small fowling-piece. The practice of pivot-shooting, however, has almost ceased, never having been extensively adopted; and has nothing whatever sportsmanlike about it, being a mixture of cruelty and theft.

Another mode of pursuing ducks, which is at the same time attractive, exciting, and injurious, is by the use of a sail-boat. Not only is there the excitement of the pursuit, the rushing down wind with bellying sail and hissing water—the crested waves parting at the prow and lengthening out behind in two long lines of foam—but there is the free motion and the pleasant breeze to stimulate the sportsman. This is really a delightful sport, combining the excitement of shooting with the exhilaration of sailing; but as it disturbs the flocks upon their feeding-grounds, as it gives them no rest during the noontide hours, when it appears that ducks—like all other sensible people—love to indulge in a quiet nap, it eventually drives them away; and not only makes them shy of the locality, but injures the sport of the point-shooter, who depends upon their regular flights for his success. It is not often very remunerative, but is uncommonly attractive, and is only condemned with great reluctance on proof of its injurious results.

Every one—whether the gentleman who, in search of health or pleasure, visits the muddy bays or sand-spits of our coast, or the market-gunner who has learnt naught of useful labor for many years but to handle skilfully his heavy double-barrel—every one, we say, who pursues wild-fowl, whether for sport or business, is interested in enforcing upon his friends and neighbors the necessity of discontinuing the use of the battery and pivot-gun. Although the results of the day's shooting may be diminished for a time, they will both gain in the long run; and we shall once more see the crowds of geese, brant, and ducks stretching in interminable lines across the sky; and have them flying by the points where we hide, or dropping to our stools near by, as plenteously every day as we can now kill them, in exceptional cases, from the battery. When their feeding-grounds are undisturbed, their multitudinous hosts will again cover the waters of our bays, and hold their noisy consultations over the many theories and crotchets which are disputed in duck philosophy. Then the true sportsman will visit his favorite tavern, located conveniently at the edge of the salt meadows, certain, in the proper season, of having fair sport; and the willing bay-man will again reap rich and permanent harvests, either for his patron or himself.

Now a good bag is so rare that gentlemen seldom go to Long Island for duck-shooting, and the inhabitants lose a valuable custom in consequence; and although, by selecting a propitious occasion, the market-man sometimes still kills a great number, he

experiences a vast majority of poor days. It is, therefore, the manifest interest of both classes to repress these unjustifiable and murderous modes of shooting, and to encourage, by all possible means, the return of wild-fowl to their former favorite haunts—the bays, lagoons, and inlets of our own beloved coast.

CHAPTER II.

GUNNERY—MUZZLE-LOADERS AND BREECH-LOADERS.

To the young sportsman, armed with the finest of implements, and trusting much to them for his success, it is a matter of mortification and surprise how well a bad gun will shoot in good hands; nevertheless, no true sportsman ever lived but, if he were able by any self-denial to scrape the means together, would purchase a valuable and necessarily expensive fowling-piece. Not only is a well made and handsomely finished gun safer and lighter than a cheap affair manufactured for the wholesale trade; not only does it ordinarily carry closer and recoil less; but it needs fewer repairs, lasts infinitely longer, and is always a matter of pride and delight to its owner.

Many guns of inferior workmanship throw shot as strongly as those turned out by the best makers—although this is not the fact in general—but greater weight has to be given to insure tolerable safety, and the locks, if not the barrels, are sure to give out in a few years; whereas the high-priced article will be as perfect at the end of a dozen years—which have accustomed its owner to its easy, rapid, and effective management—as it was in the beginning, and will endure until failing sight, wasting

disease, or accumulating years, shall compel its transfer into younger hands.

Unless a man has continual practice, or is an excellent shot, it is a serious undertaking to change his gun and accustom himself to another, which, although apparently identical in weight and shape, will inevitably differ in some slight point that will be sufficient to destroy, for a time, accuracy in aim and prompt execution in cover. Some persons require months to acquire the effective use of a new gun under difficult circumstances; and in those dense thickets where so much of our shooting is done, and where it is by instinct founded upon long habit that the sportsman is enabled at all to kill his game, and where he cannot indulge in the deliberate care that more open shooting allows—this deficiency will be most painfully apparent. For such persons to purchase a new piece, is equivalent to throwing away the sport of an entire summer or fall, and when we consider that few of us can expect to average more than forty summers or falls, the loss of one-fortieth part of life's enjoyment is no trivial deprivation.

A very cheap gun is dangerous; but it is not expected that any person reading these lines will trust his life with an instrument that common sense tells him is manufactured to kill at both ends. A gun of moderate price, that is, about one hundred dollars, is as safe as the most expensive—the iron is not so tough, but more of it is used; but in a short time the barrels will wear away; the locks, losing their

original quick spring and sharp click, will become dull and weak, till they will scarcely discharge the cap; and the stock, warping with the weather, will exhibit yawning fissures between itself and the iron lock-plates or false breech.

In lightness, however, is the great superiority of the highly wrought implement; and in hard tramping through a dense swamp of a hot July day, or deep wading in a soft snipe-meadow, or in a wearisome trudge over hill and dale after November quail, a pound will make itself felt in the additional weight of the fowling-piece, and not only so, but a light gun can be handled more readily. In open shooting, especially for the wild fowl of our bays and coasts, mere weight is a positive advantage; but in the tangled thickets, where birds flash out of sight like gleams of party-colored light, and the instantaneous use of the piece can alone secure success, a light gun is an absolute necessity.

Moreover, on certain occasions, when the barrels are exposed to an extraordinary strain, when the piece built for light charges and upland shooting is used temporarily upon the larger game of the coasts or woods, and the two and a half drachms of powder and ounce of fine shot are replaced by a dozen buck-shot, or an ounce and a half of No. 3 driven by five drachms of powder—then it is pleasant to feel that the iron is of the utmost possible tenacity and the workmanship in every way faultless.

A learned dissertation on the science of gunnery is neither appropriate to the occasion nor

possible to the author, and would probably prove as little entertaining as instructive to the reader. The majority of purchasers cannot form an exact opinion relative to the merits of a gun prepared with the utmost skill and ingenuity to deceive them, and must rely mainly on the word of the seller or reputation of the maker. There is something, to be sure, in the smooth working of the locks, and still more in the perfect fitting of the stock; but after all, even to the experienced sportsman, there is little difference in appearance between the Sham-damn and the purest laminated steel.

American importers have a peculiarly moral and respectable habit of vending German guns stamped with the names of English makers, and pacify their consciences with the idea that the manufactures of Germany are not inferior to those of England; but they would give more satisfaction to the public and more ease to their consciences by proving this in open contest, and establishing the reputation of the German makers, than by appropriating the names and reputations that good work has made famous. So far is this deception carried, that some houses even order from the Belgian manufacturers a certain number, nominally, of each of the leading gun-makers. It may be that there is little real difference, although on the continental guns you sometimes pay for useless ornament, money that should have been expended where it would tell, on locks and barrels; but the mode of proceeding is certainly not creditable.

In a highly finished article the locks usually work with a smooth oiliness that can be distinguished with a little practice, and are fitted with great accuracy into the stock, so that projections of wood will be left standing not thicker than a piece of blotting-paper. The barrels will be without flaw or indentation, and if looked through with the breech removed, will exhibit a perfect ring of light flowing up evenly, as they are raised or lowered. The mountings will be faultless, and the cuts in all the screw-heads will point in the same direction; the screws will work easily and yet perfectly, and the triggers and trigger-plate, which are invariably neglected in a poor gun, will be admirably finished and fitted. Examine all these particulars, but especially the last, and you can form some judgment whether the piece comes from a good maker or a spurious imitator.

The greatest attention, however, in the selection of a gun should be paid to the form of the stock and the pull of the triggers; if the former is unsuited to the shape of the purchaser, or the latter are stiff or dissimilar, the consequence will be utter failure that no amount of practice will remedy. If the purchaser's arms and neck are long, the stock may be long and crooked; but if the contrary is the case, the stock must be short and straight.

If possible, the person intending to use a gun should select it for himself; and if it does not "come up right" the first time he brings it to his eye, he should refuse it positively. He must not allow himself to

be persuaded to try it again and again; for after one or two trials he will instinctively adapt his eye to its construction, and will imagine the gun suits him—an impression that the rapid flight of the first quail he endeavors to cover will dissipate. The triggers should give back at a weight of four or five pounds; the hammers of a muzzle-loader at ten or twelve, and of a breech-loader at twelve or fourteen. For the former, the best cone is what is called the inverted, where the bore is larger at the top and receives the entire flame from the cap.

The shape of the breech for the muzzle-loader formerly gave rise to much learned disquisition and many plausible theories; but, in all probability, had no influence on the shooting, which is due mainly to the form and quality of the barrels. Joe Manton founded his fame on the idea that the lines of force, if reflected from a hollow cup, like rays of light from a reflector, would be directed parallel to one another and lengthwise of the barrel; but later experiments have tended to destroy this theory. The simple fact appears to be, that powder exerts just so much force, and, as it cannot escape sideways, it must go out at the end of the barrel; and that the shape of the breech, except so far as it may affect the rapidity of ignition, has no influence whatever.

These questions, however, are being effectually disposed of by the march of events and the general diffusion of breech-loaders; to the latter, as they are not generally known or appreciated in our country—to which, by its nature and its game, they are

peculiarly adapted—the writer's remarks will be mainly confined. Feeling entirely convinced, even from a short experience, of their superiority in most particulars, and their equality in all, he regards the consequence as inevitable that they will utterly supersede the old-fashioned fowling-piece; the few defects that were originally alleged to exist in them having been either removed or remedied, and the supply of ammunition for them in this country having become sufficient. They have won their way slowly into public favor against the interested opposition of gun-makers on one hand, and the ignorance and superstitious dread of change of gun-users on the other.

They are a French invention of twenty years' standing, and proved their superiority long ago; but prejudice was too strong for them, as it has been for many another good thing. Their merits, nevertheless, slowly conquered opposition, convinced the intelligent, and confounded the obstinate; till at last in England—the very hot-bed of prejudice and the favorite abiding-place of antiquated ideas—there are now sold five breech-loaders to one muzzle-loader. As they are not extensively used with us, the description of them will have to be somewhat minute, and would be better understood if the reader would take the trouble to examine one for himself.

The best and most generally adopted of the various kinds is the *Lefaucheux*, or some slight modification of it; and to that the attention will be principally directed. In this gun the breech, which in

the muzzle-loader screws into the barrel, is omitted, and the barrels are open at both ends; they are fastened to the stock by a pin and joint a few inches beyond the guard. When free, the muzzle hangs down, and the breech end presents itself several inches above the stock, so that the cartridge can be readily inserted; when the barrels are pressed back into their place for firing, they are caught by a bolt that can be opened or closed by a lever lying along the under part of the stock, between the guard and the joint. The false breech is flat, solid, and heavy, and completes the barrels, taking the place and performing the duty of the breech in the muzzle-loader. The hammers have a flat surface on the striking end, and the locks are back-actioned, to avoid interfering with the other mechanism.

A cartridge is made of stout paper, shaped like a short section of the barrel, with a brass capsule on one end and open at the other; it is two or three inches long, and has a pad of thick paper beneath the capsule. In this pad a hole is punched on the inside and the percussion-cap is inserted, with a brass pin resting in it and projecting above the capsule on the outside. The percussion-cap is entirely within the cartridge-case, and the brass pin passes through a hole drilled in one side of the capsule, just large enough to admit it and exclude moisture entirely. A blow on the projecting end of the pin drives the other end into the cap, and discharges the latter. The cartridge-case is prepared already capped, and is sold in England for from thirty to

fifty shillings the thousand; it may be recapped by an instrument made for the purpose with a peculiar cap, and may be used, on an average, three times.

The cartridge must be loaded as the gun would be, only by the use of a short ramrod or a special loading implement; the powder is poured in, a wad placed above it, and the shot and another wad follow. The cartridge may then be trimmed down and the end bent over, so as to retain the load securely, if it is to be carried for a considerable distance; but where the shooting is from a boat or stand, the case should be left untrimmed and of full length. A chamber is cut away in the lower part of the barrel, which corresponds exactly with the cartridge-case, so that the latter fits perfectly in it; but, if there is an interval between the end of the cartridge and the shoulder in the barrel, no injury to the charge or the shooting appears to result. A small notch is cut in the upper edge of the barrel to contain the brass pin, and allow it to project so as to receive the blow from the hammer.

When the bolt is withdrawn and the barrels are allowed to fall so as to bring the open breech fairly into view, the loaded cartridge is inserted, the barrels are sprung back to their place with a sharp snap that sends them home at once, and are ready to be discharged. To allow the cartridge to be inserted, the hammers must be drawn to half or full cock; and when the trigger is pulled, they fall upon the pin, which penetrates the cap and fires the load. The entire mechanism is so simple that it can hardly

become deranged, and will last as long as the barrels. The greatest care is necessary in making the chamber that receives the cartridge of a proper shape, for if this is faulty the cartridges are apt to stick after explosion.

There is no decided improvement on the original Lefaucheux model, except in the modification of the machinery, and a convenient method of separating the barrels from the stock; and no other innovation of a like character need be particularly described. The needle-gun, which is made on a somewhat similar principle, is more curious than valuable, being both dangerous and complicated, and possesses no advantages over the other pattern. In it the cartridge has a percussion-cap so disposed at its base that it is penetrated by a needle, which is projected by a spring through a hole in the lower end of the cartridge; but the composition of the cartridge, and the manner of its insertion, are altogether different from the same in the Lefaucheux gun.

According to the arrangement of some English guns, on a plan invented by Jeffries, the lever, instead of closing forward, lies under the trigger-guard, when the barrels are closed; and provision is made for tightening the bolt, in case it wears loose by long usage. This invention permits of the use of forward-action locks, and the easy separation of the barrels from the stock, and has come into vogue in England; it is undoubtedly convenient in both these particulars, and has as yet developed no corresponding drawbacks.

Personally, the writer has always preferred British to French or Belgian guns, although chance has compelled him to own as many of the latter as the former. The English gun is made for work; even when cheaply manufactured, it will be found effective where efficiency is necessary; and it is far more beautiful to the eye of a true sportsman, with its plain blued lock-plates, and total deficiency of ornament, than the Continental weapon, covered with engraving and ornamentation, but defective in some of those minutiæ that lend nothing to its beauty, but add much to its usefulness. This is particularly the case with breech-loaders, which, if not manufactured carefully, are almost useless, and which, although originally invented in France, are at this day produced in more serviceable style—unless where the highest-priced article is obtained—in England than in the country of their origin. Great discredit was brought upon breech-loaders among us at their first introduction, in consequence of the importation of inferior articles, and they still labor under the disadvantages of that failure, although rapidly overcoming all objections.

There are a few implements that are necessary to the use of a breech-loader, which are much simpler than they at first appear. To load the cartridge is required either a short ramrod and a machine for turning over the edges of the case upon the wad, to retain it in its place, or an apparatus, also invented by Jeffries, that combines all the requisites for loading, and by the aid of which a hundred cartridges

can be loaded in an hour. As the case can be used several times, and the cap, which is of a peculiar size, has to be placed in its exact position to receive the pin, a capper invented for the purpose is employed, by which the cap is inserted, and the pin pressed into it without the least difficulty; a pair of tweezers are used to withdraw the pin after a discharge, in order to free the old cap and make room for the new, and a large gimlet will be found useful for extracting any discharged caps that may happen to stick.

A cleaning-apparatus is also occasionally used, consisting of a brush at one end of a string and a small weight at the other; the weight is dropped through the open barrel and the brush drawn after it; but, as the gun may be fired ten times as often as a muzzle-loader without fouling, a plain rag and cleaning-rod will answer. Cartridge-cases, of course, cannot be obtained like powder and shot at every country store, and to obviate the danger of finding oneself, after extraordinary good-luck with a gun, without the means of firing it, it is well to carry a couple of brass cases, which can be used with a common French cap, and reloaded indefinitely almost as quickly as a muzzle-loader.

The sportsman, by the aid of these implements and a couple of scoops with handles for powder and shot, recaps the cartridges which have been discharged, loads them as he would a gun, only much more rapidly, and lays them aside for future use. In the field, he carries them in a leather case,

or, which is the preferable plan, in a belt round the waist, or in his pockets, being able to store in the pockets of his vest alone at least twenty. The English sportsmen carry them loose in the pockets of their shooting-coats; but a belt is convenient and commodious, holding from thirty to fifty, and distributes the weight pleasantly. Where the shooting is to be done from a boat or stand, of course they will be kept in an ammunition-box, without having their edges turned over, as there will be nothing to loosen the wads.

The reader may naturally suppose that there is risk in carrying a number of loaded cartridges about the person; but in this he is entirely mistaken. In the first place, the difficulty of discharging a cartridge, except in the gun, is surprising; no pressure will explode the cap, and no ordinary blow, unless the cartridge is retained in a fixed position; and if one falls, the weight of the shot compels it inevitably to fall on the end: but in case these difficulties are overcome, the result is merely the discharge of a large fire-cracker.

The writer instituted a number of experiments, and having succeeded, after many trials, in setting off the cartridge, found that the powder burst the paper, but failed to drive the wad out of the case. This was tried with cartridges in all positions, horizontal and perpendicular, but produced invariably the same result, with unimportant modifications; and it was further ascertained that the fire from one would not communicate to another. So that, if a

cartridge does explode accidentally, it may scorch the clothes or even burn the person slightly, but can inflict no serious injury. These remarks, however, do not apply to the brass cartridge-cases, which must be handled more carefully. The common paper-cases may therefore be carried with perfect impunity, and transported, if carefully packed, without risk.

A more curious idea—for the dread of danger from the loaded cartridge is natural—prevailed at one time, that the barrels were weakened because they were open behind, instead of being closed by the breech-screw; as if a cylinder would be rendered more cohesive by screwing another piece of metal into one end. In fact, if the breech-screw has any effect whatever upon the strength of the gun, its presence is probably an injury. The charge, it will be observed, presses against the shot on one side and the false breech on the other, and would not be retained any more securely by the addition of a breech-screw, which tends to separate instead of closing the barrel. So, also, it must be borne in mind there is no strain worth mentioning on the hinge-bolt, and no danger of the barrels blowing away with the charge; while the disposal of the metal at the false breech, and the omission of the ramrod, tends to make the gun light at the muzzle—a great advantage in snap-shooting.

There is absolutely no escape of gas at the break-off; none can escape unless the brass capsule, which closes the joint hermetically, can be driven out, and

this is a sheer impossibility. The gas cannot penetrate the paper of the cartridge, and if it bursts the latter, still cannot escape except through the brass; and although the least perceptible amount may come out alongside of the pin, it is scarcely traceable, and nothing like what is lost at the percussion-cap in the common gun. These cartridges are wonderfully close, as the reader may conclude when he is informed that a loaded breech-loader, left entirely under water for fifteen minutes, was discharged as promptly as though it had never been wet; while a muzzle-loader, that had not been half so long exposed, would not go at all, and required an hour's cleaning. In fact, the breech-loader is entirely impervious to any ordinary wetting, will not fail in the worst rain, and the average number of miss-fires, in well made cartridges, is one in a thousand.

In the handling of this gun there is one peculiarity: the pins rise from the middle of the cartridge, and not at one side, like the ordinary cones, thus bringing the hammers closer together. To the beginner this may appear awkward, but is no real disadvantage. It would seem also desirable to use more powder with a breech-loader, although this is not necessary to so great an extent as it was formerly; but, on the other hand, the weight at the breech appears either to diminish the recoil or reduce its effects on the shooter; as the testimony of persons using breech-loaders is unanimous that the recoil is less perceptible than with muzzle-loaders, although the scales have refused to verify their impression.

One immense advantage of the breech-loader is its safety in loading, especially in a confined position, as on a boat or in a battery. Whereas, in the muzzle-loader, immediately after the discharge, while the smoke is still pouring from the barrel, and while the fire may be smouldering invisible below, the sportsman deliberately pours in a fresh charge of powder, holding his hand and the entire flask over the muzzle, endangering his life, and incurring injury far more frequently than most persons suppose; with the breech-loader, the barrels are opened and fall into such a position that no discharge can take place, and never point towards the person of their owner.

Several of the writer's friends have been maimed for life by the premature discharge of a load in the muzzle-loader from a spark remaining in the barrel; the risk connected with it has always seemed very great; and even with the patent flasks, which are hardly practical inventions, more or less unavoidable. This danger is entirely obviated by the breech-loader, which cannot go off until the barrels are restored to position after the charges are inserted; cannot leave hidden sparks to imperil the owner's life or limb; never expose the hand over the loaded barrel, that may have been left at half-cock, if the sportsman is liable to thoughtlessness or over-excitement; and which can be loaded without difficulty in the most confined position. So, not only do we have rapidity, but entire safety in loading.

The objections, however, urged against breech-loaders have not been few, and, if well founded, forbid the use of the gun; if, as has been said, the target is not so good, nor the shot sent with as much force, the requisites of a first-class sporting implement are wanting. These charges, freely advanced, have been sustained in a measure by the wretched performance of poor guns, but have finally been brought to the only true test—actual experience, under equal conditions; and by this test have been so utterly annihilated that their discussion is only necessary on account of popular ignorance of the experiments. When breech-loaders first came prominently before the English public, their supposed merits and demerits were discussed in the sporting papers in an animated and violent manner; and in order to settle the questions at issue, the editor of the London *Field* determined to have an open trial, where the breech-loaders and muzzle-loaders could be fairly matched against one another. The contests took place in 1858 and 1859, and being carefully conducted, settled the dispute for the time being, and, even before the latest improvements, established more fully the superiority of the breech-loader. The best guns and gun-makers of England were represented; and in spite of occasional variation and accidental luck—as in the pattern of the first muzzle-loader—the prejudices against the modern arm were so entirely dissipated that the old-fashioned guns are at present rarely sold.

Since that trial considerable advance has been

made in the minutiæ of the manufacture; and now it is the general impression of those acquainted with the arm, that the breech-loader, with a slight additional increase of powder, shoots both stronger and closer than its rival. In the pigeon-match between the nobility and gentry of England in 1863, described in the London *Field*, volume xxiii., p. 389, where it is to be supposed that the best implements the country could furnish were used, and where some of the shooting was done at thirty yards, the first and second prizes were both taken by breech-loaders. With all allowance for the quality of the marksman, the quality of the gun that wins a match at English "blue-rocks" must unquestionably be good; and this, the universal experience of those matter-of-fact John Bulls, who test everything by success, has entirely confirmed.

A trial of guns was made in 1859, and the results were published in tabular form in *The Shot-Gun and Sporting Rifle*, by Stonehenge, p. 304. The targets were made of double bag-cap paper, 90 lbs. to the ream, circular, thirty inches in diameter, with a centre of twelve inches square, and were nailed against a smooth surface of deal boards. The centres were composed of forty thicknesses for forty yards, and twenty for sixty yards, and weighed eighteen and nine ounces respectively, with such slight variation as will always occur in brown paper. The powder was Laurence's No. 2, the shot No. 6, containing 290 pellets to the ounce, and the charges were weighed in every instance.

TABLES OF THE FIELD TRIAL.

Name of Maker.	Kind of Gun.	Bore.	Length of Barrel.	Weight of Gun.	Charge of Powder.	Charge of Shot.	No. of Marks on Face of Targets.		No. of Sheets pierced.		No. of shots through 20 sheets.		Total on face of 4 targets.	Tot'l thro'gh 4 targets.	Recoil in pounds.	
			in.	lb. oz.	drs.	oz.	at 40 yds.		at 60 yds.		at 40 yds.		at 60 yds.					
Pape, Newcastle.....	Muzzle-loader	12	30	6.11	2¾	1¼	158	118	68	60	28	33	5	2	399	68	68	62
Prince & Green, London	"	12	30	7.6	2¾	1¼	148	98	52	65	28	22	1	2	363	53	66	65
Pape	"	12	29½	6.8	2¾	1¼	116	129	46	40	25	28	1	1	331	55	68	64
Egen, Bradford.....	Breech-loader	12	30	7.8	3	1¼	144	90	32	58	28	30	0	2	324	60	untested.	
Prince & Green.....	"	12	30	7.2	3	1¼	103	93	60	62	24	31	2	4	3 8	61	"	
Pape	"	12	30	7.0	3	1¼	132	98	55	38	26	33	2	3	318	64	70	68
Pape	Muzzle-loader.....	13	30	7.0	2¾	1¼	117	71	47	61	29	37	4	8	296	78	untested	
Needham, London...	Breech-loader.....	13	29	6.10	3	1¼	65	185	24	54	29	39	0	1	278	69	64	62
Egan.....	Muzzle-loader.....	13	28	6.14	2¾	1¼	113	113	24	46	23	34	0	1	296	58	68	68
Culling, Dowtham Market.....	"	12	29½	6.10	2½	1 3/8	106	103	35	31	22	32	0	0	275	54	59	61
Reilly, London.....	Breech-loader.....	16	30	7.4	3	1¼	95	105	50	31	20	27	2	0	281	49	untested	
Elliott, Birmingham.	"	16	28	7.4	2¾	1	78	99	22	42	30	40	0	1	236	71	64	66
Needham	"	13	28½	7 4	3	1½	97	95	31	20	22	26	0	0	243	48	65	61
Hast, Colchester	"	12	31	7.8	3	1½	100	77	32	28	33	25	0	0	287	58	72	69
Reilly.....	"	12	30	7 4	3	1¼	88	91	37	31	22	27	2	1	247	52	76	73
Elliott	"	13	28	5.4	3	1	90	87	20	28	20	31	1	0	225	52	64	68
Francotte, Liege....	"	14	29½	7.8	3	1⅛	60	48	31	40	25	23	0	0	179	48	74	68
	Averages.....						106	97	33	43	26	30	1	1½	285	59	67	66

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Name of Maker.	Kind of Gun.	Bore.	Length of Barrel.	Weight of Gun.	Charge of Powder.	Charge of Shot.	No. of Marks on Face of Targets.				No. of Sheets Pierced.		No. of shots through 20 sheets.		Total on face of 4 targets.	Total through 4 targets.	Recoil in pounds.	
							at 40 yds.		at 60 yds.		at 40 yds.		at 60 yds.					
			in.	lb. oz.	drs.	oz.												
O. Smith, Derby	Muzzle-loader	15	30	6.14	2¾	1⅛	101	121	48	55	38	22	3	5	325	68	63	58
Culling	"	14	28½	6.11	2¼	1⅛	147	85	42	48	24	19	0	0	322	43	53	54
Dougall, Glasgow	"	14	27	5.14	2½	1	130	92	30	60	25	27	2	0	312	54	65	63
Joe Manton, London	"	16	31	6.12	2½	1	122	86	36	57	27	28	2	0	301	57	64	62
Culling	"	14	29	6.0	2¼	1⅛	101	108	30	55	21	25	0	1	289	47	60	44
Reilly	Breech-loader	15	30	6.14	3	1⅛	105	106	63	26	29	33	6	1	300	69	69	76
Lang, London	"	15	29	6.8	3	1⅛	129	57	45	52	20	28	0	3	283	51	64	60
Reilly	Muzzle-loader	14	29	6.4	2¾	1⅛	99	99	34	42	32	27	0	8	274	67	68	74
Prince & Green	Breech-loader	15	30	7.0	3	1	77	100	41	31	33	26	5	0	249	64	71	73
Prince & Green	Muzzle-loader	14	30	7.0	2¾	1	71	92	52	27	20	29	0	0	242	49	69	64
Hast	"	15	30½	6.8	2¾	1⅛	83	55	44	24	28	29	5	0	206	62	68	67
Reilly	Breech-loader	15	28	6.4	2¾	1⅛	68	121	34	7	18	28	0	0	225	46	68	72
	Averages						104	92	42	40	26	27	2	1⅛	277	56	65	64

The guns were classified according to their weight. The breech-loaders, which used one quarter of a drachm more powder, showed about an equal recoil; the recoil differed surprisingly, ranging from 44 to 76 lbs., and was no indication of the power with which the shot was driven—a greater number of sheets being pierced where the recoil was under the average. The patterns produced by the muzzle-loaders varied from those of the breech-loaders less than they did from one another, and far less than that of one barrel differed from that of the other; in fact, the right-hand barrel seems to have shot much the best, and some of the guns that excelled at 40 yards fell far behindhand at 60 yards.

In penetration, which is a more valuable quality in a gun than even pattern, the breech-loaders took the lead; one pierced through 40 sheets and another through 39 sheets, so that the vaunted superiority of the old gun in this particular was found not to exist. It was further noted that a great improvement in this particular had taken place in the breech-loaders since the trial of the year previous, which improvement has been going on steadily since. The trial also proved that, although the breech-loaders required an extra amount of powder to give them force, it caused in them no additional recoil, and was objectionable in so far only as it entailed extra expense and weight of ammunition. The muzzle-loader was left, to offset its numerous inferiorities, nothing more than a claim to diminished weight of gun and ammunition, and a trifling saving in ex-

pense; in force and pattern it was equalled; in safety and handiness it was far surpassed by its competitor.

A book called the *Dead Shot*, which has been circulated extensively in our country, remarkable more for the wonderful number of mistakes, if not absurdities, that it contains, than for any other quality, denounces the breech-loaders in unmeasured terms, and, among others, gives the following categorical objections, to each of which the writer appends, from personal experience, what he considers an answer. The *Dead Shot* says:

"1. The breech-loader does not shoot so strong nor kill so far as the muzzle-loader, though allowed a quarter of a drachm of powder extra."

The contrary was proved at the *Field* trial, as shown by the foregoing tables, and is proved in the field daily.

"2. The breech-loader is, of necessity, much heavier than a muzzle-loader of the same gauge."

About one quarter of a pound.

"3. It is more expensive as regards ammunition, and also as to the gun itself—the latter by reason of its not lasting so long, and its greater liability to get out of repair than a muzzle-loader."

The cartridge-cases cost about twenty dollars a thousand; so that if they are used but once, a single additional quail or woodcock will pay for ten of them. The same wise economy raised this objection of expense against percussion-caps when first introduced. The gun lasts longer, as there is no

breech to become rusty or burnt out with percussion powder, and the barrels may always be kept in perfect cleanliness.

"4. The recoil on discharge is heavier and the report louder than that produced by the muzzle-loader."

The first portion of this paragraph is answered by the foregoing tables, and the second is not only false but childish.

"5. The penetration of wet and damp in rains, fogs, or mists, between the false breech and barrels, and often into the cartridge itself, cannot be avoided in the present form of breech-loader, more especially in one that has been much used. And if the cartridge-case gets damp, it adheres to the barrel, and cannot be removed without considerable difficulty."

That rain cannot penetrate the cartridge-case is pretty well proved by the experience already mentioned of firing a gun that had been under water fifteen minutes; and if dampness gets in between the false breech and barrels, or under the latter, the parts should be wiped dry after use. The residue of this paragraph is answered below.

"6. There is obviously a greater risk of bursting; indeed, the safety of a breech-loader, after much usage, becomes doubtful by reason of the escape of gas between the false breech and barrels, particularly after the trying vibrations of heavy charges."

There is no such escape of gas, and "obviously" can be none, unless it can find its way through nearly a quarter of an inch of solid paper and brass. Does

the comparatively excessive escape of gas at the cone and vent of a muzzle-loader endanger its safety? and will the "trying vibration" of one cartridge affect the strength of another not in the barrel at the time?

"7. The time and trouble required in filling the cartridges, and the danger attending that operation before going out shooting, are very considerable; and it is with one peculiar form of cartridge only that the breech-loader can be used; and if purchased of the gun-maker ready filled, they come very expensive."

This paragraph is unanswerable; as no source of danger in loading the cartridges is specified, the writer is at a loss to know what is meant—there being, in his experience, no danger whatever. As for the trouble, it is far less than that of loading the gun.

"8. The operation of *making* and filling the cartridge is to a sportsman a tedious, dirty, dangerous, and laborious one—quite as much so as making fireworks."

This may be true of making the cartridges, which no sportsman ever thinks of doing more than he would of making percussion-caps, which is a far more dangerous employment. The filling them is identically the same as loading a gun, omitting capping, but without its dirt or danger. If loading a gun is akin to making fireworks, so may be loading cartridges. In fact, using cartridges is merely loading at a convenient season expeditiously, and may be done to the extent of thousands without soiling the hands.

"9. Another serious objection to the breech-loader is the weight of ammunition that must be carried in the shape of ready-made cartridges when going to the Highlands or any remote shooting quarter. And then arises the difficulty of keeping them perfectly dry in damp weather; and every one knows how very soon the damp will penetrate through a paper case, and cake, and weaken the force of the gunpowder."

If the cartridge cases are carried unloaded, the bulk of ammunition is increased; if loaded—and they are as safe as powder in mass—neither the weight nor bulk is at all increased. The powder might be injured in very damp weather in the course of years; but such an occurrence has not yet come before the public.

"10. The cartridges must be carried in a strong case with divisional compartments. In the event of their being carried loose, they become damaged; and the danger of so carrying them is excessive, by reason of the results which may ensue in the event of a fall or accident in getting over a hedge, or otherwise, whereby a blow or friction is given to the metal pin which explodes the cap."

Friction will not discharge them, and no ordinary blow; and, in case of explosion, the danger is merely what may result from the discharge of a charge of powder in the open air—by no means so great, but about as probable as from the explosion of the caps in the cap-pocket. The writer has never heard of such an occurrence, and English sportsmen

universally carry cartridges loose in their pockets.

"11. The extra weight incurred in being obliged to carry a sufficient number of cartridges for a day's sport, in a very cumbersome leather case, with iron compartments, considerably exceeds the ordinary weight of powder-flask and shot-pouch, with ammunition for a similar amount of sport."

This may be, if any one is fool enough to use iron compartments; but in a proper receptacle—a leather belt—the weight is much less.

"12. Another of the principal defects in the breech-loader is the flat surface of the breech, which scientific and practical experimenters have proved to be erroneous, by reason of the much greater power and extra force which may be obtained from the conical interior form of solid breech—the rule being that 'force cannot be expended and retained also;' and as it must, of necessity, be expended to a certain degree by explosion and recoil on a flat-surfaced breech, extra powder is required to produce like effects to those which result from the solid conical breech. The recoil is also considerably greater on a flat surface than on a tapering one."

So much of the foregoing as is comprehensible, the tables of the *Field* trial "and practical experimenters" have found to be erroneous. It will also be borne in mind that the inside end of the cartridge-case is conical.

"13. Joints, joinings, slides, and bolts, are all inferior to a well-made screw, as regards soundness

of the breech. A perfectly solid breech, free from all suspicious joinings, curves, and openings, *must be* by far the safer and more effective one in any instrument, in which so searching a substance as gunpowder has to be compressed and exploded."

If this last objection is correct the others are superfluous, as it disposes of the discussion; and the statement will be true whenever it can be shown that the cohesion of a tube is increased by forcing a screw into it. To silence, however, such senseless cavils, gun-makers construct the breech end of the barrels slightly heavier than in the muzzle-loader.

These being the greater disadvantages, the *Dead Shot* then adverts to the minor ones:

"On reloading, it is necessary to draw out the case of the discharged cartridge before inserting a full one. *It is true the discharged cartridge may generally be withdrawn almost instantly;* but if intended to be refilled and used another day, it must be carefully replaced in the cartridge-case in one of the divisional compartments, for if carried loose in the pocket it is soon spoilt. Therefore, if these important minutiæ be taken into consideration, it will be found, after all, that there is very little saving of time in re-charging the breech-loader."

This is the acme of captiousness; as though the cases might not be placed in the pocket till a favorable opportunity presented to return them to their compartments. To any one who, with numbed hands on a bitterly cold December morning, is watching for ducks at daybreak, and who looks to

reloading as a difficulty and recapping an impossibility, the large, easily handled cartridge is a blessing that he will never forget; and any one who, having used a breech-loader, will pretend that it cannot be loaded on the average infinitely faster than the muzzle-loader, is guilty of prevarication. In truth it can be reloaded in less time than the other gun can be recapped.

"With regard to refilling the cartridge-cases, the makers warrant that the discharged cases may be refilled and used again with the same facility and effect, some of them two or three times. This, however, is not always so; on the contrary, the cases expand so much on explosion of the powder, that when refilled they are sometimes not only difficult to thrust into the barrel, but on second explosion they stick so fast that in many instances the copper end comes off, on the case being attempted to be withdrawn, and the paper is left inside. And then, unless a loading-rod is at hand with which to force out the paper case, your breech-loader is powerless."

Were it not for the next clause, one could suppose that *Dead Shot* had never heard of an extractor, which is a little instrument not so large as a cone wrench, always carried in the shooter's pocket, and with which the paper can be pulled out in about two seconds' time, without possibility of failure; until this is done, and for those two seconds, "your breech-loader is indeed powerless."

"None but those who have experienced the difficulty of extracting a bursted cartridge-case, which

adheres firmly to the sides of the barrel, can imagine the annoyance it causes; and if the cases get damp, or if refilled ones are used, the difficulty is constantly occurring. And then the 'extractor' is of little use, beyond pulling away the brass bottom of the cartridge and leaving the paper case more difficult to remove."

New cases, whether they burst or not, scarcely ever stick in passably well-made guns, and reloaded ones rarely; but when they do, the extractor will, in nine times out of ten, withdraw them at once; and if on this tenth occasion the brass capsule is torn off, the extractor, by the aid of a hook at the end, made expressly for the purpose, will tear out the empty paper instantly.

"Unless the brass pin which explodes the cap is made very precisely, a miss-fire is inevitable. If there is any corrosive substance upon it or upon the sides of the hollow in which it is to travel, the hammer will fail to drive it home or explode the cap. The hammer must strike it in exact position, or the pin will bend; any extra length or protrusion of the pin, or any dampness or foulness which causes it to stick, or if the pin be nipped in any way so as to weaken the force of the hammer, a miss-fire will probably be the result; and the pins must not be too loose, or they will drop out of the cartridges on any sudden or violent exertion on the part of the sportsman."

All but the last clause of this paragraph is prejudice stated as fact, and that is simply ridiculous.

It happened that one hammer of the writer's breech-loader was broken and so badly mended that it did not fall true upon the pin, and yet the only miss-fires he has ever met with arose from his own neglect, in omitting to recap one or two of the discharged cartridges before reloading. The average of miss-fires with a cartridge is asserted by Mr. Eley, the celebrated gun-maker, to be one in a thousand—an assertion openly made, and, as yet, uncontroverted, and which is confirmed by the experience of the writer and his friends. So far from the pin's being liable to fall out by any exertion whatever, even if the sportsman turned acrobat for the nonce, it is simply to be said that it cannot be withdrawn with the fingers, and requires a small pair of pliers.

"If in drawing out an unexploded cartridge the brass end comes off or breaks away from the paper case, *it will not be advisable to use the cartridge in that state:* it cannot be safe to explode it in the barrel of a breech-loading gun; in fact, it would be almost as unsafe as a loose charge of powder. *And in the event of the cap missing fire in a breech-loading cartridge, it is not desirable to recap the cartridge.* When once the brass and the pasteboard part company, the power of retaining the explosive force within the case is considerably weakened, and so is the expulsive force."

On reading the foregoing, one would suppose the author of such statements had never seen a breech-loader. Where the brass end breaks away from the paper case, the cap comes off with it, and the car-

tridge cannot be discharged unless touched off with a lucifer match or a lighted cigar—a performance that probably few persons out of a lunatic asylum would attempt. And as for recapping a cartridge that once missed fire, it cannot be done, *as the cap is inside.* What species of cartridges the *Dead Shot* must have used, the writer of this cannot imagine. In case of a miss-fire the cartridge has to be unloaded, and may then be recapped and reloaded like any other.

The writer experimented extensively in reloading cartridges, using some a dozen times, and has experienced the annoyance of sticking cases and separating capsules, and tested it thoroughly; and he must say that if a cartridge is loaded over three times with heavy loads it is apt to stick, especially if it is loaded shortly after being discharged, and while it is still soft from the heat. The cases should be left for several hours before they are reloaded, until they are dry and hard, and, if there is time, should be reloaded in the mould—a block bored out to the exact size, in which they fit accurately, and in which they cannot spread.

They rarely stick, however, before the third discharge, and then may be pulled out by force—in pieces, if necessary, and thrown away. If, however, they cannot be forced in, and are torn apart before they are discharged, which never happens except after repeated use, the charge is wasted; the powder should be at once poured out, the wads pushed aside by the extractor to let the shot escape by the

muzzle, and the empty case torn away—an operation implying neither danger nor difficulty. It is desirable to pour the shot out at the muzzle, lest a pellet lodge under the breech-end of the gun and interfere with its operation.

"The rapidity with which a succession of shots may be made is urged as one of the chief recommendations of the breech-loader; but rapidity of firing is seldom desired, *and the barrels may become heated to danger.* The sportsman's every-day success frequently depends on the range of his gun, but seldom on the loading and firing of it."

The *Dead Shot* is an English book; and in England there are no rail or bay-snipe; the author, therefore, has never whistled a flock of marble-winged willet or golden-brown marlin back, time after time, to the fatal stand, and delivered repeated discharges into their thinning ranks. But ducks abound there; and for any person who has been present at the early morning or late evening flight, and has seen and heard the rush of wings innumerable, when a dozen guns and men to load them would hardly have been enough, to say that "rapidity of firing is seldom desirable," is marvellous indeed. The italicized portion of the last objection further implies that *Dead Shot* has never used a breech-loader; for, while in the muzzle-loader the heat of repeated discharges may be dangerous, in a breech-loader it cannot, as paper intervenes between the barrel and the powder. The writer has fired his breech-loader until it was so hot he could not bear his hand on it.

This is the last of *Dead Shot's* objections, and none of them merit the attention they have received, except from the fact that this book has been extensively circulated in our country, where the merits of breech-loaders are little known. The objections so manifestly arise from prejudice or ignorance, that they need no contradiction to any one acquainted with the true state of the case, and are worthy of an author who, in his opening, says: "He only can be called a 'Dead Shot' who can bring down with unerring precision an October or November partridge, whenever it offers a fair chance, *i. e.* rises within certain range;" which range he afterwards, at page 86, puts at forty yards, in the following words: "With judicious loading and a regard to the principles of deadly range, a partridge may be killed with certainty at forty yards." The partridge resembles, in many points, our quail, and sportsmen can tell whether quail can be killed "with certainty at forty yards," or whether the best shot alive can kill them every time at any distance.

In discussing the merits of any new invention, prejudice is one of the strongest grounds of opposition to overcome; and prejudice in favor of a weapon that we have tried and found trustworthy, that years of service have enabled us to use skilfully and have endeared to our affections, that has never, under all diversities of trial, failed to merit our confidence, is not merely a natural but praiseworthy feeling in the human mind. Prejudice, when at last driven to a corner and forced to give up as untenable the ob-

jection to the safety or shooting qualities of the breech-loader, will say: "I can shoot fast enough with a muzzle-loader."

For woodcock and quail-shooting, rapidity in loading is not essential, although frequently after a bevy of quail has flushed, one or two birds will loiter long enough to be killed by the reloaded breech-loader, that would fly before the muzzle-loader could be recharged. But for killing English snipe, that have a habit of rising one after another in tantalizing succession before the unloaded gun; for ducks and rail; but above all for bay-snipe, one-half if not two-thirds of the bag depends upon celerity in loading. Duck shooting is frequently best in wet weather, when even Eley's "central fire double water-proof" caps will not always insure the ignition of the powder; and in thick covert the caps, especially if they do not fit perfectly, will occasionally be brushed off; whereas the breech-loader is impervious to wet, and is not liable to the last difficulty; above all, where different kinds of game are expected, and it may be important to change quickly the load for ducks, to buckshot for deer, or double B's for geese, the breech-loader has an infinite superiority.

The comparative merits of the two guns may be stated as follows:

For shooting quail or woodcock, where there is no necessity for great rapidity in firing, there is little advantage in a breech-loader; and, unless loaded cartridges sufficient for the entire trip are carried, the reloading them during the evening after a hard

day's fag will be found annoying. But for all the shore-birds, and even for English snipe, the breech-loader has an immense advantage. It requires a quarter of a drachm of powder extra, and, on this account as well as from the cost of the cases, is more expensive in use; with the extra allowance of powder, however, it shoots stronger, with as good a patten and as little recoil as its rival; it is somewhat heavier to carry, infinitely safer to load, rarely misses fire, and may be cleaned ere the tow can be prepared for the muzzle-loader.

Of course the better the barrels, the better it will shoot, to a greater degree even than the old gun; and it is being daily made more perfect. The weight has already been reduced, for field-guns even of No. 12 bore, to six pounds ten ounces, which is as light as any double-gun should be, and the mechanism of the parts is very fine. Of course the friction on the hinge will in the end wear it loose, but the expense of a new one is trifling, and its construction might almost be entrusted to a country blacksmith. The barrels are said to spring slightly at the discharge when the load is heavy, so that a piece of thin paper pasted across at the break-off along the ridge will be rent; and, on the other hand, Mr. Dougall, of Glasgow, claims to have made an invention called by him the "Lockfast," that removes this difficulty. The objection, however, is not important; and Mr. Dougall's invention, by which the barrels slip into a shoulder-cut on the face of the breech, is considerably slower in action than the other patterns: it can-

not be made to spring shut like the Lefaucheux, but must be drawn back into place by a short lever.

The price of a superior breech-loader, made by Jeffery of Guildford, several of whose make have been imported and given entire satisfaction, is thirty guineas, and by Dougall of Glasgow about forty guineas, although of course the price varies to suit purses; and some of the best London makers, who spare neither labor nor expense, and who turn out work that is unsurpassable, charge double these sums. It has even been asserted that Purdey has received over a hundred pounds for a breech-loader; but this is merely a fancy price, and makes the gun neither safer nor more useful than one at a third of the cost.

A breech-loader to shoot creditably must be well made, and consequently is expensive; and at the best an extra quarter drachm of powder must be allowed. This is supposed to be required by the yielding of the comparatively soft material of the cartridge-case, which must fit rather loosely in the chamber of the barrel to allow of its ready insertion, and any defect of workmanship increases this difficulty materially.

There are several descriptions of cartridge—those made by Eley of England or Gevelot of France being the best. Eley manufactures two qualities at different prices, and those persons who object to reloading their cartridges, may purchase the lower-priced article, which is not intended to be used more than once. The first quality cost three pounds a

thousand, unloaded but capped; or they may be purchased at a proportionally higher price loaded, ready for instant use, as they can be transported even across the ocean without material risk. The brown-paper cartridges of Chaudun are also good, but not quite so fine an article as Eley's; they may be reloaded, however, several times. In carrying the loaded cartridges, it is natural to suppose that there would be danger of their exploding in consequence of a sudden jar, and they are generally packed in sawdust to avoid this risk, but experience has proved that the danger is slight; generally speaking, they cannot be so discharged, and there is but one case reported where it happened; in this instance, a railway porter in England let fall a large box of them, when a single cartridge exploded, without doing any damage or discharging the others.

There are, properly speaking, no gun-makers in America; a few workmen import English locks, stocks, and barrels, and fitting them together, stamp them with their names; but I know of no establishment where the smallest portion even of the fowling-piece is manufactured. It is a matter of great difficulty to get any good work done, and the simplest repairs are generally bungled in our best shops in a way to disgrace the trade and disgust the owner; as for having a gun made, we have not advanced the first step towards it, not even having a compulsory proof-stamp.

It is hardly necessary to add that breech-loaders must be imported. They and their equipment are

kept for sale at our principal metropolitan shops, and their mechanism is so simple that any accident to it can be repaired; but as they are not in general demand, really fine articles are difficult to find, and had better be purchased specially on the other side. This can be done by the party himself, by sending to any European maker the length from the foremost trigger to the heel-plate, and the drop from the line of the barrels to the cheek-piece of the stock—that exist in his present gun, and which he wishes to retain. Or any of our dealers will take the measure of his gun, and import him a breech-loader that will "come up" like the old gun he has handled for years.

Much space has been devoted to the breech-loader, for the reason that the writer, while recognising its adaptability to general use, has considered it specially advantageous for the pursuit of the game of which this work particularly treats; that it has defects is not denied, but these are vastly overborne by its advantages. Prejudice is strong; for twenty years the Lefaucheux has been in common use among the French, who had satisfied themselves of its superiority; and it required that time for an invention so simple and easy to test, to cross the narrow channel between the continent and England. Americans are always ready to try a new discovery and judge of its advantages by their own experience; so that it is not probable that the breech-loader will be as long in crossing the "broad Atlantic," and locating itself securely on our shores.

There are now some twenty or thirty of these guns in use among our sportsmen, and they have generally given satisfaction. Of course it requires a short time to accustom oneself to a new implement; and a cheap piece, which it is natural to purchase on an experiment, is a poor affair, and especially so with a breech-loader; but the invention is steadily winning friends. In England, where the nature of the game is not so well calculated for its use as here, the highest authority on sporting gunnery, the editor of the *Field*, who writes under the name of Stonehenge, speaking of the two guns, says: "Indeed, so near is the performance of the two, that we cannot think for a moment that for general purposes there can be a doubt of the superiority of the breech-loader, when quickness of loading, safety, and cleanliness are taken into consideration."

CHAPTER III.

BAY-SNIPE SHOOTING.

THE various writers on the different kinds of sport in our country have generally devoted their attention to upland shooting; to the quail, woodcock, English snipe, ruffed grouse of the hills, dales, and meadows, to the prairie-chicken of the far west, or to the larger game—the ducks, geese, and swans of our coast; and the few suggestions to be found in *Frank Forester's Field Sports*, or *Lewis's American Sportsman*, are of little assistance in discussing the mode of capture of their less fashionable and less marketable brethren called bay-snipe. Having no guides to aid me but my own experience, and differing frequently in my views from the opinions expressed by the scientific ornithologists, I approach the consideration of this subject with diffidence; and for the many errors that a pioneer must inevitably commit, I crave the indulgence of the public.

The birds that are shot along our shores upon the sand-bars or broad salt meadows, or even upon the adjoining fields of upland, are among sportsmen termed bay-birds or bay-snipe; and although including several distinct varieties, present a general similarity in manners and habits. They are ordi-

narily killed by stratagem over decoys, and not by open pursuit; different varieties frequent the same locality, so that many species will be collected in the same bag; they are for the most part, except the upland birds, tough and sedgy, and at times hardly fit for the table; and they arrive and may be killed at certain periods in vast numbers.

Although despised by the upland sportsman, who regards the use of the dog as essential to the pure exercise of his art; and by the pot-hunter, because they do not generally bring high prices in market;—to the genuine lover of nature and the gun they furnish splendid sport, requiring, if not as high a degree of skill as may be needed to cut down a quail in the dense coverts, at least as many fine qualities in the sportsman, and as thorough a knowledge of their habits as any other bird. In upland shooting the dog does the largest part of the work, and invariably deserves the credit for a super-excellent bag; and truly glorious is it to follow the dog that can make that bag, and wonderful to watch his powers;—but in bay-snipe shooting there is no trusty dog to look to, who can retrieve by his superiority his master's blunderings. The man relies upon himself, and himself alone; he it is that must, with quick observant eye, catch the faint outline of the distant flock, and with sharp ear distinguish the first audible call; his experience must determine the nature of the birds, his powers of imitation bring them within gun-shot, and his skill drop them advantageously from the crowded flock. To excel in all this requires long

patience, much experience, and great qualities of mind and body; and few are the sportsmen who ever deserve the compliment paid by old Paulus Enos of Quogue, when he remarked, "Colonel P. is a werry destructive man—a werry destructive man in a flock of birds."

It is true that quail-shooting is almost a certainty; and day after day of fair weather, with well-trained animals and good marksmen, will produce nearly the same average, so that an entire failure will be almost impossible; whereas, with bay-snipe everything, in the first instance, depends upon the flight; and if there are no birds, the result must be a total blank; but when the season is propitious—and this can be determined by the experienced sportsman with tolerable accuracy—the sport is prodigious, and the number of shots enormous.

Nor is it so easy to kill the gentle game that approaches the decoys with such entire confidence, and often at so moderate a pace. The upland sportsman, who can cover the quail through the thick scrub-oaks, or the woodcock in the dense foliage of the shady swamp, and send his charge after them with astonishing precision, and who will expect easy work with the bay-snipe, will find himself wonderfully bothered by their curious motions and irregular flight, till he has acquired the knack of anticipating their intentions. He will learn that their speed is irregular; that while at times they will hang almost motionless in the air, at others they will dart past at the rate of a hundred miles an hour;

that although usually flying steadily, they will frequently flirt and twist as unexpectedly as an English snipe; and that often they will either suddenly drop from before his gun and alight, or, taking the alarm, will whirl fifty feet into the air; and when one barrel has been discharged into a flock, the rest will "skiver" so as to puzzle even the best marksman. It is not enough to kill one bird with each barrel from a flock, as in quail-shooting, but a number must be selected at the moment they cross one another, so that several may be secured with each barrel; to do this will require much practice and entail many total misses, and is rarely thoroughly learned by the upland sportsman. It will not answer to follow the example of an enthusiastic French gentleman, whom I once left in the stand while I went to the house for dinner; and who, on my return, in an excited way remarked:

"Ah! I have vun beautifool shot, I make ze lovely shot; tree big birds come along—vat you call him?"

"Willet?" I suggested.

"No, no; ze big brown birds."

"Sickle-bills!"

"No, not ze seeckle-bills."

"Jacks?"

"No, no; not ze jacks."

"Marlin!"

"Yes, yes; tree big marlin come close by, right ovair ze stool; zay all fly near ze other; I am sure to kill zem, it was such beautifool shot. I take ze gun and miss zem all!"

Moreover, the excitement of a rapid flight is intense; the birds arrive much faster than the muzzle-loader can be charged, and a flock will hover round the stand, returning again and again in the most bewildering manner; as there are usually two sportsmen in each stand, and the stands are often in sight of one another, a sense of rivalry is added to the other difficulties of the position.

As the birds approach, great judgment is required in selecting the proper time to fire, both as regards the condition of the flock and their position relative to the associate sportsman; they must be allowed to come well within the reach of both, and yet be taken when they are most together, and not allowed to pass so far as to endanger the success of the second barrel. Each sportsman must invariably fire at his side of the flock, and wait till it is well abreast of him, and never either shoot over his neighbor's corner of the stand or at his portion of the birds. Nothing is so disagreeable as to have a gun discharged close to one's head, except perhaps to have it discharged at one's head; the noise and jar produce painful and dangerous effects, and unsettle a person's nerves for hours. No man who will fire by his associate without presenting his gun well before him, can know the first principles of gunnery —or who, if knowing them, wilfully disregards their effects, is a fit companion. The concussion from the explosion is exceedingly unpleasant, even if the gun is several feet off, and will produce a slight deafness.

Of the number of birds which can be bagged, it

is hardly possible to speak within bounds—more than a hundred having been killed at one shot—but probably a hundred separate shots are occasionally fired by each sportsman in the course of a day, and with the breech-loader even more. There have been times when twenty-five pounds of shot have been expended by one gun, but those days exist no longer, and it is rare to use more than five pounds where the load does not exceed an ounce and a quarter.

The uncertainty of the flight is the principal drawback to bay-snipe shooting, although experience can in a measure overcome the difficulty; but to the citizen confined to certain days, a selection of time is an impossibility. The height of the season extends from August 15th to the 25th for the bay-birds proper; and from August 28th to September 8th, for golden plover; and if a north-easterly storm should occur at this period, it will be followed by an immense flight.

Dry seasons are never good, and so long as the weather remains warm the birds will tarry in their northern latitudes; when the meadows are parched for want of rain, they become too hard for the birds to perforate, and the latter, being unable to feed, must migrate elsewhere; but when they are soft with moisture, the older snipe that have left their progeny at the far north, linger on the feeding-grounds and wait for the latter to arrive. They seem to make it a point to send back portions of their number from time to time to look after the young; and on such occasions, both the messengers and the

young stool admirably. Thus flocks of old birds will frequently be seen wending their way towards the north, while the main flight is directed southward; and these flocks will invariably come to the decoys, although the main body will take no notice of them.

Of course when the meadows are too parched to furnish food, the birds cannot return on their tracks, but must continue their flight to more hospitable shores, and in this way one of the best chances for good shooting is lost. There are probably, in addition, many ease-loving gluttons among the troupe, who if they find the feeding-grounds well supplied, stop for a time to enjoy the luxury after their long abstinence in the inclement north; and in passing to and from their favorite spots, are said by the native human species to have established "a trade" to those places. These birds, of course, wherever they see a flock apparently partaking of a plentiful repast, naturally pause to obtain their share, and thus fall a prey to their appetites.

Bay-snipe fly during the day and night high up in the heavens, or close to the earth, in rain or shine, but especially during a cold north-easterly storm, which, from its direction, is favorable to their southerly migrations; and they have a vigor of wing that enables them to traverse immense distances in a short time. In proceeding with the wind, it is usually at a considerable distance from the earth; but when facing an adverse current, they keep close to the surface, and consequently are apt to be attracted

by the stools. They do not move much during foggy weather, for the simple reason that they cannot see their course, but do not seem to be troubled by a rain. Although clear—that is to say, not rainy—weather is preferable on many accounts, for their pursuit, good sport is frequently had, especially on Long Island, during a rain.

Their line of flight is peculiar. Except the plover, they do not follow the entire coast, and are not found to the eastward of Massachusetts, but appear to strike directly from their northern haunts to Cape Cod, where, in the neighborhood of Barnstable, there was in former times excellent shooting; thence they proceed to Point Judith, or even somewhat to the westward of it, and then they cross Long Island Sound, rarely much to the eastward of Quogue; from Long Island they make one flight to Squan Beach, and so on along the bays and lagoons of the southern coast to the Equator, or perhaps beyond it to the Antarctic region. The plovers follow the coast more closely, and strike the easternmost end of Long Island in their career.

It is very remarkable, that these birds which generally pass northward in May, and require only three months for incubation and growth of young, live the other nine months apparently in comparative idleness at the south. This peculiarity has led to the suggestion that they may travel to the Antarctic ocean during their absence from the north—which, although probable, is as yet, from our entire ignorance of their habits, a mere suggestion.

During the northward flight in May, there is often good sport, but the time is more uncertain than in August; nor do the birds, which are old and wary, stool quite so well as on their return. In the spring they pursue the same course as in the autumnal flight; which, although it is the most direct line, and follows the principal expanse of salt meadow, necessitates considerable journeys far out at sea. But it is doubtless the fact that these birds, in consequence of their stretch and power of wing, could sustain an unbroken flight from north to south, and accomplish the distance in a wonderfully short space of time. Unabated speed of one hundred miles an hour is equivalent to twenty-four hundred miles in a day, and portions of the flock may not pause between Labrador and the swamps of Florida.

When the wind is strong and continuous from the westward, it is supposed that they pass far out to sea; and during these seasons there will be no flight of birds either at Long Island or on the Jersey coast. At such periods sportsmen often conclude that the entire race has been destroyed, till the easterly winds and soaking rains of the following year, bring them back more numerous than ever. As they must migrate, and are not to be found anywhere on the land, it is clear that they must have the power of completing their journey in one unbroken flight.

The principal varieties are the sickle-bill, jack-curlew, the marlin and ring-tailed marlin, the willet, the black-breast or bull-head, and golden plovers, the yelper, yellow-legs, robin-snipe, dowitchers, brant-

bird, and krieker. The upland or grass-plover is pursued in a different manner, and the smaller birds are not pursued for sport at all.

The sickle-bills, so named after the beautiful sweeping curve of the bill, which has been known to measure eleven inches in length, are the largest of them all. They are colored much like a marlin, have a beautiful bright eye, a short reed-like call, and a steady, dignified flight. In stretch of wings they exceed three feet, and nothing can be more impressive than the approach of a large flock of these birds with wings and bills extended and legs dropped in preparation for alighting amid the stools.

They are often shy in the first instance, but as soon as one of their number is killed, they return again and again to the fatal spot—apparently in blind confidence that he must have alighted instead of fallen, or out of brotherly anxiety for his fate. I have on several occasions attracted a large flock that was hesitating whether to approach or not, and almost resolving to depart, by killing one of their number that incautiously ventured within long range—for immediately on seeing him fall, they approached, in spite of the report, with full confidence.

They are easily killed, by reason of their moderate speed and customary steadiness, although they can dart rapidly when alarmed, and will often, like all the bay-birds, carry off much shot. Their flesh is tough, very dark, and scarcely fit for the table, except perhaps when they first come on from feed-

ing on the more dainty repasts furnished by the uplands of Labrador.

The jack-curlew is a still more wary bird, and although he comes to the stools, rarely pauses over them, and never returns after being once fired at. He is seldom seen in large flocks, and flies rapidly and steadily. His cry is longer than that of the sickle-bill, and, like it, easy to imitate. From his wariness and rarity he is regarded as the greatest prize of the sportsman, although his flesh is little better than that of the sickle-bill.

The marlin is quite common, very gentle, stools admirably, and goes in large flocks. In color it is similar to the sickle-bill, but it is much smaller and has a straight, if not slightly recurved, bill. It is attracted by the same call, and is equally tough and sedgy as food. The ring-tailed marlin differs from it entirely in color, resembling a willet—except that its wings are darker, and its tail black with a white ring—but it has the long, straight, marlin bill. It is a rare bird, seldom collects in large flocks, and is often fat and tolerable eating. It does not stool as well as its plainer brother, but from its scarcity and higher gastronomic claims, it is more highly prized.

The willet is greyish in general color, with a white belly and broad bands of black and white across its wings. It has a loud, shrill shriek, stools well, flies steadily, congregates in large flocks, and when fat is quite eatable. It often associates with marlins and sickle-bills, where its light colors make a beautiful contrast.

The last four varieties are nearly similar in size and greatly exceed the following, but are far less desirable in an epicurean point of view.

The golden plover is one of the finest birds that flies; it associates in flocks of a thousand, stools well, is extremely fat, is delicious on the table, and has a peculiarly musical whistle. It frequents the uplands, and feeds on grasshoppers. Its back is marked with a greenish red that faintly resembles gold, and gives rise to its name. The young are quite different in plumage.

The black-breast or bull-head is a shy and rather solitary bird—although it occasionally collects in large flocks—but it is quite fat, and frequently killed in the salt marshes over the stools used for the ordinary bay-birds.

The yelper has a strong, rapid, and often irregular flight, and a loud cry. It stools well, but escapes rapidly as soon as shot at, darting from side to side in a confusing way, and returns less confidently than the willet or marlin. It pursues its course generally high in the clouds, whence it will drop like a stone when coming to the stools. On Long Island it goes by the name of big yellow-legs; its call can be heard at an immense distance, and is repeated continually as it flies. Gastronomically considered, it is passable, and, when fat, really excellent.

The yellow-legs, or little yellow-legs, as it is termed on Long Island, is similar in appearance to the yelper, but has a softer and more flute-like note, and congregates in larger flocks. It stools admi-

rably, and is killed in immense numbers. Its flight is rapid and irregular, especially when it is frightened; and, as food, it ranks with the yelper.

The brant-bird is a beautiful bird, and stools well; it rarely consorts in large flocks, and is quite acceptable on the table.

The robin-snipe is a graceful, beautiful, and delicious bird; its favorite localities are the meadow-islands of the salt bays and lagoons; its flight is steady, and it does not collect in such immense flocks as the last named variety. Its whistle consists of two clear shrill notes, by which it is readily attracted; and its predominant colors are grey on the back and red on the breast.

The dowitcher, which is considered ornithologically as the only true snipe of them all, has the habits of the sandpiper and the distinctive attributes of the *scolopax;* it is abundant, extremely gentle, and excellent eating. It stools admirably, coming to any whistle whatever; and although it can skiver when alarmed, it usually flies steadily. It associates with the smaller birds.

The krieker feeds on the meadows, remains till late in October, becomes extremely fat, and is an epicurean delicacy; it utters a creaking cry, but will not stool at all. It also flies with the smaller snipe.

Having thus mentioned the peculiar distinctive qualities and characteristics of each bird, of which a fuller description will be given in another place, we will now pass to a consideration of the best mode of their pursuit. This being by stratagem, the more

thorough the deception, the more favorable will be the result; and although they can frequently be attracted by an accurate imitation of their call within reach of their destroyer, crouched in the open field and unaided by decoys, they will approach much better to the concealed sportsman and well made stools. A stand is usually erected near some pond or bar where the birds are in the habit of alighting—and this can be built in half an hour of bushes or reeds—high enough to conceal the sportsman comfortably seated in his arm-chair; and as the grass has become by the latter part of August a dull yellowish green, he may even shelter himself from the sun's rays by a brown cotton umbrella, if he be delicate or ease-loving. His clothes should assimilate to the color of the landscape, and be as cool as possible—for the temperature is often oppressively hot; and a waterproof should always be at hand in case of rain, to cover, not so much the sportsman as his gun and ammunition, which may be seriously injured by dampness and salt air combined.

If it is impracticable to build a stand, and the locality is sandy, a hole may be dug, with the excavated sand banked around it, and the sportsman may deposit himself upon his Mackintosh at the bottom. However, to one unaccustomed to the posture, it is difficult to rise and shoot from such a position, and a comfortable seat is far preferable; and besides, the mosquitoes are thicker near the earth; the breeze has less effect and the sun more.

The stools should be so placed that they can be readily seen from the line of flight, not too high above the water, and the farthest not more than thirty-five yards from the shooter. If too near a bank, they will be confounded with the grass, and be invisible even to the keen eye of the snipe. They should be scattered sufficiently to allow each one to be distinct, and must be headed in different directions, so that some may present their broadsides to every quarter of the heavens. They should tail down wind, in a measure, from the stand, as the birds, no matter what direction they come from, head up wind in order to alight, and will make a circle to do so. In this way they reach the lower end of the imitation flock first, and are led safely close to the sportsman, giving him an admirable opportunity to make his selection from their ranks.

As the tide varies according to the wind and moon, and will often cover with several feet of water places usually dry, it is well to have two sets of sticks—one set for deep water much longer than those for ordinary use; otherwise, it will occasionally be found impossible to set out the stools at all, or they will stand so high above the ground as to resemble bean-poles more than birds.

It is customary to have in the flock, which should not be less than forty, imitations of the different species—some being brown to represent marlin, others grey, with white breasts and a white and black streak over the tail to stand for willet, and so on; but a more important point is to have them large.

Small stools cannot be seen far enough to attract a yelper sailing amid the clouds, or a marlin sweeping along the distant horizon; and although it is pretty and appropriate to have them of suitable colors, size is more necessary. A sickle-bill is a large bird, and I have seen one tethered among the stools towering above them, so that the imitations looked puny by comparison, although larger than they were usually made. The word stool is derived from the Danish *stoel*, and signifies something set up on less than four legs, but of the mode or reason of its adoption we have no record; it is in universal use, to the exclusion of the more elegant and appropriate term, decoy, which is confined to imitation of wild fowl. Stools are ordinarily made of wood, and occasionally painted with great artistic care and skill; and although a rough affair, coarsely daubed, seems often to answer nearly as well, there are times when the birds, rendered wild by many hair-breadth escapes, look sharply ere they draw near, and will not approach unsightly blocks of wood, no matter how sweetly they seem to whistle.

As wooden stools take up much room and are troublesome to carry for any distance, tin ones have been made that will pack together in a small space. By heading these, different ways, they present a good view to the snipe, except when the latter are high in air, from which position they are invisible. To remedy this defect, it has been suggested that a strip of tin of the width of the body may be soldered along the upper edge; and thus, while they pack

snugly, a section of the object is presented in every direction.

Wooden stools are decidedly the best, especially where it is desirable that the birds should alight, and are in general use. They are made of pine, and painted the distinctive colors of their prototypes; thus sickle-bills, marlin, and jacks, are all brown with dark spots on the back and wings; willet, as heretofore described; yellow-legs, dark mottled grey on the back and wings, and white beneath; dowitchers brown on the back and wings, and yellowish-white below; bull-head plover light on the back, with dark breasts; robin-snipe light grey on the back and side, and reddish beneath. But the snipe are not always discriminating, and a few varieties will answer every purpose.

Stools are easily made and moderate in cost, and every sportsman should have not less than twenty-five of his own, so that in case those that he finds at the country taverns for the public use are engaged, he may have some to fall back upon—although twenty-five are not a full supply. They may be carried in a bag or basket, with their feet and bills removed; and the basket will be useful to hold lunch, ammunition, or game.

Extempore representations can be made from the dead birds, although they are not quite so good as the wooden ones, by cutting a forked stick with one end much longer than the other, and thrusting the longer point into the bird's neck and the shorter one into its body. It may then be stood up in the sand,

and will make a decoy scarcely distinguishable by man from the living prototype, but apparently more unnatural to the birds—which are sometimes alarmed at its ghastly appearance—than the ordinary stools.

Very perfect stools are made of India-rubber, which, being compressible and light, can be readily transported, and are a deceptive imitation; their principal defects are their liability to injury from shot—which is also the case with wooden ones—and the facility with which the hole where their long leg is inserted becomes torn—an accident that entirely destroys their usefulness. They can be packed in a small compass, and are infinitely the best article where they are to be carried long distances. Although of necessity undersized, their full plump shape makes them visible at a considerable distance.

To prevent the bills, which are the most delicate part, from being injured, it is necessary to make them rather thicker than those of the living bird; they are to be painted dark-brown, blue, or grey, according to circumstances; and their loss, although it may not diminish the attractiveness, destroys the beauty of the fictitious flock. More important than perfection of decoys, is accuracy in whistling; this should be a perfect imitation and answer to the call of the bird, and will often allure him to the fowler without any decoys whatever. It is impossible to describe the calls on paper, and long practice will alone give a thorough knowledge of them; they are generally shrill and loud; the shriller and louder the

better—for man's best efforts will rarely equal the bird's natural powers. The yelper has a clear, bold cry, and the willet a fierce shriek that can be heard for miles; and if listened to from a distance, it will be found that the bird's call can be heard twice the distance of the man's answer. It is true that when the snipe are near at hand and about alighting, a lower whistle is better, for the reason that it is more perfect, and because the cry changes to a note of welcome when the flock receives its fellows. And often, when the birds once head for the stools, if not distracted by neighboring stands, or alarmed, they will come straight on without any whistling, although this is by no means invariably the case.

Many persons find insuperable difficulty in whistling the clear, shrill, sharp calls; and for them artificial whistles have been manufactured with a hole at the lower end, which, being opened or closed by the finger, like the holes in a flute, regulates the sound. These artificial whistles are not so good as a perfectly trained natural one; the sound is not sufficiently reed-like, and they occupy and confine one hand when it should be free to seek the gun. They are suspended from the button-hole by a string, so that they can be dropped in an instant; but are only used out of necessity.

A curious one, to be held in the mouth, has been invented of a wedge-shaped piece of tin in the form of an axe-head, with two holes through the sides. The sound is regulated by the tongue, and is altogether more correct than that of any other whistle;

but more time and patience are required to learn the use of this invention than of the lips. It will be far better for the sportsman who intends to pursue this sport, to practise with the organs that nature has given him, however much time or perseverance may be necessary, and then there will be no danger of leaving his whistle at home.

As before remarked, the great drawback to the sport of shooting bay-snipe is its uncertainty; if the flight has not come on, or a westerly wind has driven the birds to sea, or a heavy north-easter carries them with it high in air and prevents their stopping—there will be no shooting; and the most experienced hand will often receive the comforting assurance which is always bestowed upon the inexperienced, that if he had only come two weeks sooner, or deferred his visit two weeks longer, he would have been sure of fine sport. There are nevertheless certain general rules that furnish a tolerable criterion; and laying aside the spring shooting, which occurs in May, and is extremely uncertain, the main flight of small birds—such as dowitchers and yellow-legs—commences about the tenth of July, and of large birds about the fifteenth of August. Each lasts about two weeks.

The flight of large birds usually terminates with a short flight of yellow-legs, and is followed by the plover, which are succeeded by the kriekers. An easterly storm generally brings the birds, either by bearing them from their northern homes, or by forcing them in from the sea, where the main body is

supposed to fly; and if such a storm occur at either of these periods, and be succeeded by a south-westerly wind, it will surely be followed by an abundance of the appropriate birds.

During an easterly blow they will be seen passing by Point Judith in an almost unbroken line; and after it, they abound throughout the whole length of the coast, as though they had been carried to all parts of it at once. But if no such storm occur, the catching the flight is a mere chance; and where the summer has been dry, the snipe will be scarce. If the meadows have been kept moist by continual showers, there will be a moderate supply of game the summer through; but if there has been a drought, the surface becomes too hard for the snails and insects to inhabit, or for the birds to penetrate; a scarcity of food results, and there will be no flight whatever.

Scattering birds, wandering away from their fellows and exhausted with hunger, delighted at beholding their friends apparently feeding, will be killed perhaps in numbers sufficient to make now and then a decent bag; but what is known as the "flight"—when the great army moves its vast cohorts, division after division, regiment after regiment, company after company—will not take place. How they reach the south no one can accurately tell; they either fly inland or out at sea high in the air, or late at night; but their returning myriads in the spring following, prove that in some way they did reach their southern winter homes.

Notwithstanding the greatest experience, and despite the most favorable signs, the oldest gunner will find that more or less uncertainty exists in obtaining sport, and that his unlucky expeditions generally outnumber his lucky ones. Often a flight will commence unexpectedly and without any apparent reason; and a change of weather, after a long continuance of wind from one quarter, will be followed by good shooting for some days, although such weather is not intrinsically favorable. The follower of bay-birds must therefore make up his mind to disappointment, and on such occasions live on his hopes for the future, or his recollections of the past.

For this sport a heavy gun, such as is commonly employed for ducks, is not at all necessary; inasmuch as many of the birds are small and the flocks frequently scattered, it is rarely desirable to use two ounces of shot and five drachms of powder; and to fire such a charge at a solitary dowitcher, as is often done, is simply ridiculous. A light field-gun, with an ounce and a quarter of shot and three drachms and a half of powder, (or, as I prefer, an ounce of shot and three drachms of powder,) is amply sufficient—will confer more pleasure and require more skill in the use, will cut down a reasonable number from a flock, and will kill a single bird handsomely.

The gun should be kept at half-cock, and may be laid upon a bench beside the sportsman; there is always time to cock it, even if a flock is not seen till it is over the stools; and a gun at full cock in a stand, is a danger that no reasonable man will encounter.

In field-shooting, I do not approve of carrying the gun at half-cock, believing, for certain reasons unnecessary here to repeat, that it is less dangerous at full-cock; but in a stand or in a house, or in fact anywhere but in the field where it is always in the sportsman's hand, it should be never otherwise than at half-cock. It is common to pass in front of guns lying on the bench in the stand, and they often fall off, and are usually reached for by the sportsman while his eye is on the advancing flock, and does not note whether his hand grasps the barrel or the triggers; and there is an excitement, when the flight is rapid, sufficiently perilous of itself in connexion with fire-arms, without uselessly increasing it. Every precaution should therefore be taken; and if by accident the gun which cannot go off at half-cock shall be discharged in cocking or uncocking it, it will point forward, away from the stand, and in such a direction that injury to human life cannot follow.

Next in importance to care in preventing the gun's injuring a fellow-creature, is care in preventing its being injured. The least dampness, whether from fog or rain, and even the salt air alone, will rust the delicate steel and iron, and, penetrating farther and farther, make indentations that will spoil its beauty and injure its effectiveness permanently. To prevent this, oil frequently applied is the only remedy; a rag well oiled, and a bottle to replenish from, should be among the ordinary equipments, and invariably taken to the shooting-ground; the first symptom of rust or even discoloration should be re-

moved, and every portion of the iron-work kept well lubricated. At night a waterproof covering should be used, and the charge invariably left undrawn, as the dirt prevents oxydization for a time; and during a rain the utmost care should be taken to protect, if not the entire gun, at least the locks and trigger-plate. Kerosene oil is excellent to remove rust, but is too thin to form a coating, and not so good a protection as sweet or whale oil. Varnish is highly recommended, but I have never known any one to try it; and in case no oil can be obtained, the gunners on Long Island are in the habit of shooting a small snipe, which is often extremely fat, and using its skin as an oiled rag.

Of course with a breech-loader the charge is withdrawn, and the cleaning apparatus may be forced through every evening, although this is unnecessary, as the dirt is rather a protection; and after the cleaning, whether of the muzzle-loader or breech-loader, the barrels should be well oiled both inside and out. If, however, the gun is to be left for a long time unused and exposed to salt air, a piece of greasy rag wound upon a stick may be thrust into the barrels to the bottom, and oil should be liberally applied to the exposed parts. Moreover, the locks, however well they may fit, will be injured after a while, and should be removed and examined occasionally. The size of shot used should be changed according to the season and character of the flight; in July, when the yellow-legs and dowitchers are the principal victims, No. 8 is abundantly large; but in August, when curlews,

marlin, and willets are flying, all of which are able to endure severe punishment, No. 6 is preferable. Eley's cartridges are often useful with grass-plover, although they ball so frequently that the majority of sportsmen have lost faith in them.

Favorable seasons for snipe, when heavy or repeated rains have saturated the meadows, and filled every hollow with stagnant pools of dirty water, are also favorable for mosquitoes. Persons who suffer from the bites of this pestiferous insect—and the difference between individuals upon this subject is remarkable—should prepare themselves with mosquito-nets and ill-scented oils, as they would for a visit to the wild woods; while those who are much affected by the sun should bring unguents with which to temper its intensity and assuage the pain that its burning rays inflict.

Shoes are the proper things for the feet, as boots become heated and uncomfortable; and a brown linen jacket with white flannel pantaloons, thick enough to resist the attacks of a mosquito, and with the necessary underclothes for an exceptionally cold day, constitute the most practical rig.

If the sportsman use a muzzle-loader—which he should not do if he can afford to buy a breech-loader—he must have a loading-stick which he can extemporize from his cleaning-rod by substituting a ramrod head for the jag. This he does by simply having a piece of brass of the proper size and shape to screw into the place of the latter. He should also have two guns, or he loses the chance at the return-

ing flock, which is the most exciting, as it is often the most successful shot.

The powder should be coarse; the large grain of the ducking-powder being alone fitted to withstand the deleterious effects of the moisture that is an invariable concomitant of the salt atmosphere of the ocean.

One great difficulty that the writer has encountered in preparing this work, is a proper selection of names—the natural history of our country is popularly so little understood; to copy English names and apply them to creatures bearing a faint resemblance in general coloring, though neither in habits nor scientific distinctions, was so natural to the first immigrants, and the introduction of a proper appellation is so nearly impossible, that the confusion in nomenclature of our birds, beasts, and fishes is hardly surprising. This confusion existing in every department of natural history—confounding fish of all varieties, leaving birds nameless, or giving them too many names—culminates among the bay-snipe.

Although the bony-fish or mossbunkers of New York become the menhaden of the Eastern States, and king-fish are transformed into barb in New Jersey, and perch become pickerel in the west—there are rarely more than two names, and every fish has some designation; but with bay-snipe, after an infinite multiplication of names for certain species, others are left entirely unnamed. Many that are frequently killed are without a popular designation, and more still are called frost-birds, and meadow-

snipe, and beach-birds—names that might with justice be applied to the entire class, and which are so utterly confused, that persons from different sections of the country do not know what others are talking about. To make matters worse, the scientific gentlemen have stepped in, and after indulging in plenty of bad Latin, have added fresh English appellations, more unmeaning and less appropriate if possible than the common ones.

From this mass of incongruities the writer has endeavored, while preserving the best name, to select the one in general use, bearing in mind that names are mere substitutes, and not descriptive adjectives. The name frost-bird or frost-snipe—which belongs to entirely different creatures—is applicable to every bird that appears after a frost, and as nearly a hundred varieties are in this category, it is not distinctive; the names meadow-snipe and beach-bird are ridiculous, but the latter, being applied to an unimportant class, is allowed to stand. The snipe that is herein called a krieker, or, as it may be spelled, creaker, which utters a hoarse, creaking note, is called in various places meadow-snipe—although most of the bay-birds haunt the meadows; fat-bird, whereas others are equally fat; and short neck, in spite of the fact that its neck is longer than some species; while ornithologists call it pectoral sandpiper, probably because it has a breast. So also with the brant-bird, which is called on the coast of New Jersey horsefoot-snipe, because it feeds on the spawn of the horse-foot; notwithstanding that the yellow-legs and seve-

ral others do the same. The name, however, is not satisfactory on account of its similarity to the brant or brent-goose; and probably the scientific designation, turnstone, if it were at all in common acceptation, would be better. It is to be hoped these names will at some day be harmonized by universal consent, and these pages will at least make mutual comprehension open the way for that desirable result. The sickle-bill, jack-curlew, marlin, willet, golden-plover, yelper, dowitcher, and krieker, are excellent; and the ring-tailed marlin, black-breast plover, yellow-legs, and robin-snipe, are at least descriptive. Were these generally accepted, a simple and tolerably accurate system of nomenclature would be obtained; and it has been my effort, while placing the preferable name at the head of the description of each variety, to collate all the other names that in any section of our vast territory are applied to the same bird. In this attempt I can only be partially successful; for the ingenuity of the American people in coining new names, added to a profound ignorance of ornithology, has produced a confusion that no one man can reduce to order.

Bay-snipe, except the plovers, kriekers, and a few others, are not considered delicate eating, contracting along the salt marshes a sedgy flavor; but on the shores of the western lakes, where the fresh water appears to remove this peculiarity, the yellow-legs and yelpers—which are often found in considerable numbers, and are called by the general appellation of plovers—are almost equal in tender,

juicy delicacy to the English snipe. Whether the same change is noticeable in the larger varieties, I cannot say of my own knowledge.

The gunners have an ingenious way of stringing them in bunches of a half dozen each, on the longest feathers taken from their wings, a pair of these being tied together by the feather ends, and the quillpoints thrust through the nostrils of the birds. It is desirable to put them up in small bunches, as under the warm temperature of summer they will, unless every precaution is exercised, soon become tainted. To prevent this, the entrails should also be carefully removed without disturbing the plumage; and a little salt, or, as many persons recommend, coffee, rubbed inside, and they should be at all times carefully protected from the sun. Their sedgy flavor grows stronger with every day they are kept; and being extremely oily, the least taint renders them, together with all the wild inhabitants of the coast, unfit for food.

Bay-snipe are essentially migratory, rarely stopping on our shores to build their nests and rear their young; during the spring months they pass to or beyond the coast of Labrador, and attend to the duties of maternity in the vast levels and swamps that surround Hudson's Bay, and constitute a large portion of the northern part of British North America. In my ramblings through the Provinces, I was frequently informed that they abounded during the latter part of summer on the marshes near the Bay Chaleur in New Brunswick. This must evidently

have been during their return flight; but whether they were our bay-birds in their vast variety, or whether they were merely the flocks of golden plover that follow the winding of the coast and subsequently visit Nantucket and Montauk Point, I had no opportunity to determine by personal experience.

With us they make their appearance in the neighborhood of Boston Bay, and thence they are found, with various intermissions, caused by the nature of the ground, all the way to the State of Texas. The innumerable bays, sounds, and lagoons of our Southern States, inclosed by broad meadows and including thousands of marshy islands, are their favorite feeding-grounds, and are visited by them in unnumbered thousands. The larger varieties may be seen there all through the fall quietly feeding, and scarcely noticing the approach of man. In Texas they seem to congregate in vast bodies, and probably move off to or beyond the equator in the early winter months, although this has never been positively ascertained.

They are not killed as game south of Virginia, and rarely south of New Jersey; in fact, it may be said that only on Cape Cod, Long Island, and the shore line of New Jersey, are they scientifically pursued. At these places the sport has greatly diminished of late years; a few years ago Barnstable beach was a celebrated resort; and at Quogue, parties used no stools, but stationed themselves along the narrow neck that connects the beach with the main land, and fired till their guns were dirty or their am-

munition exhausted. Then it was no unusual thing to expend twenty-five pounds of shot in a day, where now the sportsman that could use up five would be fortunate.

Of all the locations on this extent of meadow and beach, no place is so famous, from its natural advantages and its ancient reputation, as Quogue. It is true that the best pond is permanently occupied by a famous Governor, a still more famous General, and a notorious Colonel—although the latter is not "in the bond;" but there are other good stands, and for small birds—yellow-legs, dowitchers, and robin-snipe—it has no equal. Although many flocks pass it high in air, all those that follow the coast, low down to the earth, must cross the meadows that are compressed to a narrow strip at this point, which is the dividing-ground between the two great bays on the south side of Long Island.

Unfortunately, a watering-place for the summer resort of the exquisites of New York has been established in the vicinity, and the consequent advantages of comfortable beds and a good table are more than overborne by the annoyance of such companionship. If there be a flight of birds, every unfledged sportsman takes out his elegant fowling-piece, and, daintily dressed, proceeds to the meadow, where he would be comparatively harmless, and dangerous only to himself, were there room for him and his fellows. But as the ground is limited, and the favorable points few, he is sure to interfere; and, while killing nothing himself, ruins the prospects of those

who could do better. At Quogue, decoys were first used about the year 1850, and the best day's sport of late was one hundred and thirty-eight birds.

West of Quogue there are some snipe, and occasionally a good flight at South Oyster Bay, and more rarely still at Rockaway; but the large birds are not numerous north of New Jersey. Squan Beach, Barnegat, Egg Harbor, and Brigantine Beach are famous for the large birds—the sickle-bills, curlews, willets, and marlins—that visit them; the same number of shots cannot be obtained as at Quogue, but the bag is larger. At the former places there is also a flight, of greater or less extent, of dowitchers and yellow-legs, but these are not so abundant as along the margin of the Great South Bay of Long Island. On the other hand, a bag of one hundred of the larger varieties is not unusual; while at Egg Harbor the robin-snipe, which affect marshy islands are exceedingly numerous.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JERSEY COAST.

"*A Girl from New Jersey.*"

WHY is it that every one who visits New Jersey comes away with an ecstatic impression of Jersey girls that he never can forget? Lovely they are, it is true, but not more beautiful than other fair ones of America; affable, gentle, graceful, sprightly—but these qualities are common in our angel-favored country. Yet no one that has been blessed with their company can forget them, but carries for ever in his heart the image of one, if not two or three, Jersey girls.

These reflections were suggested to the writer by the recollection of his first trip, many years ago, to the Jersey coast. The summer had been oppressively hot, and being detained in town during the fore part of August, he was glad to avail himself of the first chance to escape from the city and betake himself to the cool, invigorating breezes of the seashore. Not knowing precisely what route to follow, he trusted himself on board the train without any definite destination, and, upon inquiry, was informed that a good place for bay-shooting was at Tommy Cook's, near the coast, and about four miles from

one of the last stations on the road, where, under the charge of the Quaker host, considerable comfort could be had.

To Cook's, therefore, upon reaching the station, the writer told the driver of what seemed to be a mongrel public coach, that he wanted to go; but in thoughtlessness, never conceiving that there could be two Cooks, he omitted the Tommy that should have preceded the direction. His surprise was by no means moderate to find, upon reaching his destination, the supposed Quaker host slightly inebriated, dancing a solitary hornpipe to an admiring circle. Thinking perhaps that that was the custom of Jersey Quakers—for the State is exceptional in certain things—he took a glass of bad whiskey with the jovial landlord, made proposals, much to every one's surprise, to go shooting the day following, and retired early.

Next morning a short walk dissipated all idea of finding game, and having made the discovery that he was still fifteen miles from the proper shooting-ground on the beach, he returned to the house, and in order to enjoy a few hours ere the wagon for his further transportation would be ready, joined a bathing party. It was quite a sociable affair; both sexes, dressed in their bathing clothes—the girls without shoes—crowded down in the bottom of an open wagon. But surely it is not fair to tell how one of the flannel-encased nymphs nearly fell from the wagon, and was caught in the arms of the writer, who had jumped out for the purpose; nor how the

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rest drove off to leave them; nor how he bore his lovely burden—plastic grace and beauty personified—bravely in pursuit; nor how his foot chanced to trip—accidentally, of course—and they fell and rolled in the sand together. If he would tell, he could not; words do not exist for the purpose. Try, male reader, to carry one hundred and twenty pounds of essential loveliness with only a single flannel garment to protect it; feel it give to your pressure; clasp its exquisite but yielding contour; press it to your heart, and then in an ecstasy roll over and over with it in the sand. Having done so, endeavor to describe the sensation, or forget that particular girl in a life-time.

The road to the beach lay through a village formerly known by the euphonious and distinctive title of Crab Town—a village of a thousand inhabitants. It was evening ere Crab Town was reached, and just beyond, the driver came upon a bevy of female acquaintances. In a moment the suggestion was made that they should ride; after a little demur they accepted, and were crowded in. The stage was not large, but there would have been room if they had been twice as numerous; they filled every seat, and every lap besides.

There are days in one's lifetime that should be celebrated as anniversaries; and if any gentleman has carried in his arms, and rolled in the sand, one charming Jersey girl in the morning, and has had another equally charming sit on his lap in the evening, he may look upon that day as never likely to repeat itself.

There was a hum of pleasant voices—words like, "Oh! Deb, we should not have got in;" "Why, Mary, we may as well ride—it's all in our way." "Now, Lib, don't say I'm married." "Well, your husband is a good way off." But who could attend to what is occurring around him when seated in the dark with a lovely angel in his lap? So situated, the ride appeared very short, and the next mile, which was as far as our delightful freight would go, was passed seemingly in about a minute and a half, decidedly the fastest time on record. At the end of it, on a suggestion from the driver, who lived in that section and knew the country, toll was taken of their rosy lips as passage-money. Jersey is a glorious place.

Passing Charley's, as he is generally called, the son of the old man, who for years was famous as the first hunter in that land, we turned off beyond, down the beach. The bay between the mainland and the sand-bar, known everywhere as "The Beach," was narrow, widening slowly as we advanced, until, at the end of our seven miles' journey, it was nearly three miles across. There was little vegetation beside salt grass and bay-berry bushes; but of the animal kingdom the only representatives—the mosquitoes—were thicker than the mind of man can conceive; they rose in crowds, pursuing us fiercely, covering the horses in an unbroken mass, settling upon ourselves, flying into our eyes, crawling upon our necks, stinging through our clothes, and filling the air. Although small, they were hungry be-

yond belief, and, following their prey relentlessly, compelled us to fight them off with bushes of bayberry for our lives.

Mosquitoes are found plentifully at our summer watering-places, and still more numerously in the wild woods, grow abundantly in Canada, and are over-plentiful at Lake Superior; but nowhere are they so merciless, fierce, and numerous, as, on occasions, at the New Jersey beach. They are a beautiful little creature, delicate, graceful, and elegant, but obtrusive in their attentions; although the ardent lover was anxious to be bitten by the same mosquito that had bitten his lady-love, that their blood might mingle in the same body.

One good effect they had, however, was to compel the driver to urge on his weary team, and leave him no time to gossip at Jakey's Tavern, over the beach party that was to be held there next day. A beach party is another delightful institution of the Jerseyites, and consists of a congregation of the youths of both sexes, especially the female, collected from the main shore, and meeting on the beach for a frolic, a dance, and a bath. As it rarely breaks up till daylight, the pleasantest intimacies are sometimes formed, and soft words uttered that could not be wrung from blushing beauty in broad day.

The establishment of the "old man"—the sporting "old man," not the political one—since he has been gathered to his forefathers, is kept up by his son-in-law, usually known by the abbreviation—Bill. It is not an elegant place; sportsmen do not demand

elegance, and willingly sleep, if not in the same room, in chambers that lead into one another; but it is situated within a hundred yards of the best shooting ground, and is as well kept as any other tavern on the beach. Sportsmen do not mind waiting their turn to use the solitary wash basin, drawing water from the hogshead, or wiping on the same towel, but are thankful for good food, and the luxury of a well filled ice-house.

In addition to the general directions heretofore given, it may be well in this connexion to describe more particularly the mode of killing bay-snipe. A number of imitation birds, usually called stools, are cut from wood, and painted to resemble the various species; they have a long stick, or leg, inserted into the lower part of the body, and a sufficient number to constitute a large flock are set up in shallow water, or upon some bar where the birds are accustomed to feed. They are made from thin wood, or even from tin, and are headed various ways so as to show in all directions; the coarsest and least perfect imitations will answer.

The most remarkable trait of the shore birds, or bay-snipe, is their gregarious nature and sociability. A flock flying high in air, apparently intent upon some settled course, will, the moment they see another flock feeding, turn and join it. Their natural history, or the object which they evidently have in thus joining forces, does not seem to be understood; but the baymen, by imitation-birds and calls, take advantage of this instinct. Farther south, along the

shores of Florida and Texas, these snipe collect in crowds; and either this is the first step towards that purpose, or they are merely attracted by the feeding birds to a promising place for a plentiful repast.

Although ordinarily they will come to the stools of themselves, if they happen to be at a distance flying fast and high, the gunner must trust to the shrillness of his whistle and the perfection of his call, to attract their attention. If they turn towards the decoys and answer the whistle—which they will do at an immense distance—they are almost sure to come straight on, and their confidence once gained, rarely wavers.

There is a common expression among the baymen, that birds have a trade, or are trading up and down over a certain course, by which they mean that they fly backward and forward at regular hours, and to and from regular places. Snipe that are thus engaged trading are not only in the finest condition, but come to the decoys, or stool, as it is termed, the most readily. They are probably stopping on the meadows, and fly to their feeding-grounds in the morning and back at night. The great migratory bodies, which frequently stretch in broken lines almost across the horizon, and which are pursuing their steady course to their southern homes, rarely heed the whistle, or turn to the silly flock that is eating while it should be travelling.

The best days are those with a cloudy sky, and a south-westerly wind. On such occasions the birds often come in myriads, delighting the sportsman's

heart, testing his nerves, and filling his bag to repletion. When the object is to kill the greatest number possible, they are permitted to alight among the stools and collect together before the gun is fired; then the first discharge is followed rapidly by the second, which tears among their thinned ranks as they rise; and, if there be a second gun, by the third and fourth barrel, till frequently all are killed. The scientific and sportsmanlike mode is to fire before they alight, selecting two or three together and firing at the foremost.

It is a glorious thing to see a flock of marlin or willet, or perhaps the chief of all, the sickle-bills, swerve from their course away up in the heavens, and after a moment's uncertainty reply to the sportsman's deceitful call and turn towards his false copies of themselves. As they approach, the rich sienna brown of the marlin and curlew seems to color the sky and reflect a ruddy hue upon surrounding objects; or the black and white of the barred wings of the willet makes them resemble birds hewn from veined marble. The sportsman's heart leaps to his throat, as crouching down with straining eye and nerve, grasping his faithful gun, he awaits with eager anxiety the proper moment; then, rising ere they are aware of the danger, he selects the spot where their crowding bodies and jostling wings shut out the clouds beyond, and pours in his first most deadly barrel; and quickly bringing to bear the other as best he may among the now frightened creatures as they dart about, he delivers it before he

has noticed how many fell to the first. Dropping back to his position of concealment, he recommences whistling, and the poor things, forgetting their fright and anxious to know why their friends alighted amid a roar like thunder, return to the fatal spot, and again give the fortunate sportsman a chance for his reloaded gun.

It was for such glorious sport as this, with fair promise of success—for the flight was on, as the saying is, when the snipe are moving—that I prepared myself the next morning. Rising at earliest daybreak, a friend, the gunner, and myself sallied out to the blind, and having set out our stools, possessed our souls in patience for what might follow. A blind is another ingenious invention of the devil—as personified by a bayman, in pursuit of wild fowl—and is constructed by planting bushes thickly in a circle round a bench. Seated upon this bench and concealed from the suspicious eyes of the snipe by the dense foliage of the bayberry bushes, the sportsman, in comparative comfort, awaits his prey. In less civilized localities he hides himself among the long sedge grass, or scoops out a hole in the sand and lies at length upon a waterproof blanket.

The wind had hauled, in nautical language, to the south'ard and west'ard, and the sun's rays driving aside the hazy clouds, illuminated the eastern sky with fiery glory. The land and water, dim with the heavy night fog, stretched out in broad, undefined outline, and the heavens seemed close down upon the earth. Through the hazy atmosphere and slug-

gish darkness the rays of light penetrated slowly, bringing out feature after feature of the landscape, lighting the tops of distant hills, and revealing the fleecy coursers of the sky.

Amid the fading darkness we soon heard the welcome cry of the bay-snipe pursuing his course, guided by light that had not yet reached our portion of the earth's surface. Instantly we responded with a vigor and rapidity on behalf of each, that must have impressed the travelling birds with the belief that we constituted an immense flock. Again and again, long before our straining eyes could catch the outline of their forms, came the answering cry. Our eagerness increased with the approaching sound, until from out the dim air rushed a glorious flock of marbled willet, and swooping down to our stools dropped their long legs to alight—we feeling as though little shining goddesses were descending upon us.

Without pausing to discuss their angelic character, but mercilessly bringing our double-barrels to bear upon the crowded ranks, we poured in a destructive broadside that hurled a dozen upon the bloodied sand. Startled at the fearful report and its terrible consequences, they rose, darting and crossing in their alarm, and fled at full speed; but hearing again the familiar call, after flying a few hundred yards, they turned and came once more straight for the decoys. Then my friend thought highly of me and my breech-loading gun, for ere he had reloaded I had discharged my two barrels three times, adding

six birds to those already upon the sand. Eighteen willet from the first flock, and ere the sun was fairly up, gave us a good start; and after the birds were gathered, the favorable send-off was duly celebrated in a few drops of water with enough spirit to take the danger out.

And now myriads of swallows made their appearance, skimming close along the water, but in one steady course, as though they were going out for the day, and would not be back till night-fall. They were followed by scattering snipe that furnished neat but easy shooting till six o'clock, when the regular flight began with a splendid flock of marlin that came rapidly from the south'ard, and after hovering over the stools and giving us one chance, returned for two more favors from the breech-loader, and left sixteen of their number.

Sportsmen of any experience know that nothing is easier than to select from a flock a single bird with each barrel; but in bay-shooting, a man who claims to excel, must kill several with the first barrel, and one, at least, with the second. If, however, to the ordinary excitement be added the natural emulation arising from the presence of several sportsmen in the same stand, the foregoing desirable result is not always attained. If, therefore, the reader shrewdly suspects we should have killed more birds than we did, let him place himself in a similar position, and record his success.

Shore birds of the various species, beginning with the magnificent sickle-bill, and including the wary

jack-curlew, the noisy, larger yellow-legs or yelper, and the smaller one, down to the pretty simple-hearted dowitcher, went to make up our morning's bag. The scorching sun when it hung high over our heads stopped the flight, and, aided by venomous mosquitoes, drove us to the shelter of the house, and turned our thoughts towards dinner.

The stands being convenient to the tavern, we had run in and snatched a hasty breakfast, but now collected to clean guns, load cartridges, and talk over results. The breech-loader being at that time something of a novelty, attracted considerable attention, and was accused of that defect popularly attributed to it, of not shooting strongly. As there were several expensive guns present—among them one of William Moore—in all of which the owners had great faith, the question was soon tested and settled to the satisfaction of the most sceptical.

That being concluded, black-breast, or bull-head plover, was the occasion of a terrible contest over the entire plover family—some of the sportsmen insisting there were three, others four or five well-known kinds. They all agreed as to there being the grass-plover, the bull-head, and the golden-plover; but some claimed in addition, the frost bird and the red-backed plover. At last one burst forth:

"There is Barnwell; he ought to know: what does he say?"

As they turned inquiringly, feeling the momentous nature of the occasion, and that now was the chance

to establish my reputation for ever, with an air of deep learning, I commenced:

"In the first place, you are mistaken in including among plovers the grass or grey-plover, as it is commonly called; it is not a plover at all——"

"Oh! that is nonsense," they burst forth unanimously; "you don't know what you're talking about."

Never was a growing reputation more suddenly nipped. Instantly reduced to a state of meekness, and only too glad to save a shred of character, I mildly suggested that Giraud's work on the birds of Long Island was in my valise, and probably contained the desired information.

"Well," said one, "let's hear what he says."

So I procured the book and read as follows:

"'TRINGA BARTRAMIA—WILSON.

BARTRAM'S SANDPIPER.

Bartram's Sandpiper, Tringa Bartramia, Wil. Amer. Orn. *Totanus Bartramius* Bonap. Syn.

Totanus Bartramius Bartram Tatler, Su. & Rich. Bartramian Tatler, Nutt. Man.

Bartramian Sandpiper. *Totanus Bartramius* Aud. Orn. Biog.'

"After giving the specific character, and a spirited account of the well-known manner of shooting them from a wagon, which is not followed with any other bird, as you well know, he proceeds as follows:

"'In Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and on the Shinnecock and Hempstead Plains, Long

Island, it is common, where it is known by the name of "gray," "grass," "field," or "upland" plover. It is very wary, and difficult to be approached. On the ground it has an erect and graceful gait. When alarmed it runs rapidly for a short distance before taking wing, uttering a whistling note as it rises; its flight is rapid, frequently going out of sight before alighting. It usually keeps on the open, dry grounds—feeding on grasshoppers, insects, and seeds. In the month of August it is generally in fine condition, and highly prized as game. When feeding, for greater security, this species scatter about; the instant the alarm is given, all move off. In the latter part of August it migrates southward, and, it is said, performs the journey at night. Stragglers frequently remain behind until late in September.'"

"It is evident he knew the bird," replied one of the objectors; "but as he calls it by six or seven names—the English ones being both sand-piper and tatler—he evidently did not know what it should be called."

"That is the way with naturalists," replied another; "they each give a name to a species, but in this case all agree that it is not a plover. What is the name plover derived from?"

"It comes from the French word *Pluvier*, rain-bird, because it generally flies during a rain. But naturalists found distinctions more upon the shape of bill and claws than on the habits of any species. According to them, plovers proper have no hind toe, or, at most, only a knob in its place."

"Do you know what Frank Forester says on the subject?"

Feeling my reputation rising a little, I resumed: "He confuses frost-bird and grass-plover, quoting Audubon as his authority; but he points out the distinctive peculiarity of the plover."

"If he thinks a grass-plover and a frost-bird are alike, he knows very little of his subject. Why, the frost-bird stools admirably, while the plover never stools at all."

"Not so fast! Frank Forester was a splendid writer, and upon matters with which he was familiar he was thorough. He has conferred an immense favor upon the American sporting world; but where he had not personal experience—and no one can know everything—he had to rely upon others. He has done as much to correct and elevate sportsmanship in this country, to introduce a proper vocabulary, and to enforce obedience to gentlemanly rules, as any man possibly could. As a body, we owe it to him that we are sportsmen, and not pot-hunters. Probably in some places the grass-plover is called a frost-bird."

"I have more faith in Giraud, and would like to hear what he can tell us about the golden-plover, unless he says that is a sandpiper also."

"He begins with a description of the black-bellied plover, which is known to us as bull-head, the *charadrius helveticus*, and then describes the American golden-plover, or *charadrius pluvialis*, and uses these words: 'It is better known to our gunners by

the name of frost-bird, so called from being more plentiful during the early frosts of autumn, at which season it is generally in fine condition, and exceedingly well flavored.' Then follow the ring-plover, or ring-neck—*charadrius semipalmatus*, Wilson's plover; the piping-plover, or beach-bird—*charadrius melodius;* and the kildeer plover—*charadrius vociferus*, these being all the varieties of American plover."

Bill could stand it no longer; but rising as the book was closed, burst forth at once:

"Those writers are queer fellows; they put the oddest, hardest, longest names to birds that ever I heard. Who would have thought of their calling a two-penny beach-bird, a radish mellow-deuce! What I have to say is—we baymen will never learn these new-fangled names."

"That is exactly the trouble," I replied. "You baymen will, in different sections of the country, call the same bird by various names, till no one can tell what you are talking about; and the man of science has to step in and dig up a third name, usually some Latin affair, which nobody will accept. Thus it is that the older frost-birds, which, strange to say, invariably arrive before the young, are known as golden-plover, and their progeny as frost-birds."

"Speaking of the seasons," replied Bill, evasively, "have you noticed that they are changing every year? The springs are later than they used to be. In old times the English snipe arrived from the

south early in March; now they hardly come till June; so, the ducks come later and stay later. The springs are colder, and the autumns warmer, than when I was young, and the bay-snipe appear in September instead of August, as it once was."

"As to the English snipe you are undoubtedly correct, but this is due probably to their increasing scarcity; and although we have no spring, and the summer extends frequently into September, this appears to result from the changes in climate effected by clearing the woods. As the forests are cut down, the cold winds of spring, and the burning suns of summer, produce a greater effect, and each in its turn lasts longer. Altogether, however, our seasons seem to be moderating."

At this interesting point in our discussion, some one discovered by the aid of a telescope that a flock of willet had settled on the sand-bank among the stools. The announcement was followed by a general seizure of weapons and rush for the blinds. My friend and myself hastened to the little boat, used in floating quietly down upon ducks, and called a "sneak box," and embarking, glided silently towards our stand. The tide had left bare a long bank of sand, upon which was collected a glorious flock, or, more properly speaking, two flocks united, one of marlin and the other of willet.

All unconscious of approaching danger, the pretty creatures were busily engaged, some in feeding, others in washing—dipping under and throwing the water over their graceful bodies—others in running

actively about, or jumping up and taking short flights to dry their wings. A happy murmur ran through the flock, and so innocent and beautiful were they that we remained watching them in silent admiration, unwilling to disturb the romance of the charming scene. The rich brown feathers of the imposing marlin formed an exquisite contrast to the white and black of the elegant willet, as the different species mixed unreservedly together.

They did not exhibit the slightest alarm when our boat, after we had ceased rowing, was borne towards them by the wind, and allowed us to approach till it grounded on the flat. Having feasted our eyes on the magnificent spectacle, we at last gave the word to fire. At the report they rose wildly, and receiving the second discharge, made the best of their way to safer quarters. Both barrels of my friend's gun missed fire, and we gathered only seven birds, as the flock, although numbering at least seventy birds, was widely scattered and offered a poor mark.

No sooner were we again ensconced in our blind, than the exhilarating sport of the morning was renewed—sport such as only those who have tried it can appreciate—sport that makes the heart beat and the nerves tingle—sport that overweighs humanity and compels the remorseless slaughter of these beautiful birds. Flock after flock, seen at great distance, and watched in their approach through changing hopes and fears, or darting unexpectedly from over our heads and first noticed when rushing with extended wings down to our stools, presented their

crowded ranks to our delighted gaze. From the very clouds, would come the shrill whistle of the yelper, or from the horizon, the long shriek of the willet, or nearer at hand would be heard the plaintive note of the gentle dowitcher; they appeared from all quarters, sailing low along the water or pitching directly down from out the sky.

Towards evening the flight diminished, and when the horn announced that supper was ready, the different parties met once more at the house to compare notes and relate adventures. All had met with excellent success, but our stand carried off the palm.

"Bill," commenced some unhappy person, after we had left the close, hot dining-room, "why do you not enlarge your house?"

"Bill is waiting for another wreck," was the volunteer response; "the whole coast is fed, clothed, and sheltered by the wrecks. The house is built from the remnants of unfortunate ships, as you perceive by the name-boards of the Arion, Pilgrim, Samuel Willets, J. Harthorn, and Johanna, that form so conspicuous a part of the front under the porch. When a vessel is driven ashore, and the crew and passengers who are not quite dead are disposed of by the aid of a stone in the corner of a handkerchief, which makes an unsuspicious bruise, the prize is fought for by the natives, and not only the cargo, but the very ribs and planks of the vessel appropriated."

"Now that's not fair," replied Bill, aroused; "no man, except my father-in-law, has done more to save

drowning men than I have. I tell you it's an awful sight to see the poor creatures clinging to the rigging and bowsprit, to see them washed off before your eyes, sometimes close to you, without your being able to help them, and their dead bodies thrown up by the waves on the sand. You don't feel like stealing or murder at such times; and besides, I never knew a dead man come ashore that had anything in his pockets."

A peal of laughter greeted this naïve remark, together with the ready response: "Bill, you were too late; some Barnegat pirate had been before you."

"No, the Barnegat pirates are kinder than the Government. We do our best to save the poor fellows, but the Government puts men in charge of their station-houses that know nothing about their business. My father-in-law was the first man that threw a line with the cannon over a ship, and he was presented with a medal by the Humane Society. He never was paid a dollar for taking charge of the station, the life-boat, and the cannon. Since he died I kept it for five years, and was paid two years; now men are selected for their politics. One lives back on the main land two miles from his station-house, another never fired a gun, and a third never rowed a boat. The last got a crew of us together once to go out to a ship in the life-boat and undertook to steer, but we told him not one of us would go unless he stayed on shore. It is a dangerous thing to have a green hand at the helm, or even at an oar, in times like that."

"How far can you reach a ship with the cannon?" we inquired.

"The line, you know, is fastened to the ball with a short wire, so that it won't burn off, and is coiled up beside the gun, and of course it keeps the ball back, and then people forget we always have to fire against the wind, as vessels are never wrecked with the wind off shore; so although the guns are expected to carry five hundred yards, they will not carry more than one hundred and eighty. That is enough, though, if they only have the right sort of men to manage them; but how is a landsman to tell whether he must use the cannon or is safe in going off in the boat? In one case, while the station-master was trying to drag his cannon down to a ship, a party of us took a common boat and landed her crew and passengers before he arrived. I don't care about the pay, for I kept it three years without; but I hate to see lives sacrificed for politics. Would you like to see the medal they gave to the old man?"

We responded in the affirmative; and he soon produced a silver medal, with an inscription on one side recording the circumstances, and on the other an embossed picture of a ship in distress, a cannon from which the ball and rope attached had been discharged and were visible in mid air, several men standing around the gun, and a life-boat climbing the seas.

"But, Bill, tell us about the Barnegat pirate leading a lame horse with a lantern tied to his neck

over the sand hills in imitation of a ship's light, and thus inveigling vessels ashore."

"I can only say I have never heard of it. As quick as a vessel comes ashore, the insurance agent is telegraphed for, and he takes charge of everything. Why, we even buy the wrecks and pay well for them, too. Now and then something is washed up like that coal in front of the house, but it is not often."

"What do you mean by the stations?"

"They are houses built by the Government and placed at regular distances along the beach. The gun, and rope, and life-boat, and life-car, and all other things that are needed in case of shipwreck, are kept in them. Then there is a stove and coal ready to make a fire, for if a poor wretch got ashore in mid-winter he would soon freeze if he couldn't get to a fire. And if the man who has charge of the station lives two miles off across a bay that he can't cross in a bad storm, what can the poor half-drowned fellows do, if they are too much benumbed to break open the door? I'd stave it in for them pretty quick if I was there, law or no law."

"It is a shame that a matter like that should not be free from politics."

"So it was once," Bill went on fluently; for on this subject he felt that his family had a right to be eloquent; "at one time some department had it in charge that never would either appoint or remove a man on political account; but that is all changed now, and the men are expected to go out with every

administration, and shipwrecked passengers die while political favorites draw the two hundred dollars a year pay for the station-master."

"Now, Bill, stop your talk about the public wrongs, and tell us something more interesting. Have you ever heard one of Bill's ghost stories?" This inquiry was addressed to the public.

Bill's face lengthened; he sat silently nursing his leg and smoking his brierwood pipe, while a shadow seemed to settle on his countenance. "Come, Bill," we responded, "let's have the story."

Bill answered not, and the shadow deepened, and the smoke was puffed in heavier masses from his lips.

"Bill is afraid; he don't like ghosts, and don't dare to talk of them."

"I am not easily skeered," he answered at last; "but if you had seen what I have on this shore, you would not talk so easy about it 'Lige, do you remember the time we saw that ship? There had been a heavy storm, and when we got up next day early, there lay a vessel on the beach; she must have been most everlastingly a harpin' it."

"What is that?" was asked wonderingly, on the utterance of this peculiar expression.

"Why, she had come clear in over the bar, and must have been going some to do that; for there she lay, bow on, with her bowsprit sticking way up ashore, just below the station yonder. Her masts were standing, and we clapped on our clothes and started for the beach. The wind was blowin' hard,

and the sand and drizzle driving in our faces as we walked over, and we kept our heads down most of the time. When we got to the sand-hills we looked up, and the ship was gone. I thought that likely enough, for she must have broken up and gone to pieces soon in that surf, so we hurried along as fast as we could; and sure enough, when we rounded the point, the little cove in which she lay was full of truck. 'Lige was there, and he saw it as plain as I did. The water was full of drift-boxes, barrels, planks, and all sorts of things, pitching and rolling about; and some of them had been carried up onto the sand and were strewed about in all directions.

"It was early, and the day was misty, but we could see plain enough, and we saw all that stuff knocking about as plain as I see you now. There was a big timber in my way—a stick—well, thirty feet long and two feet or two and a half square, so that I had to raise my foot high to clear it; I stepped one leg over, and drew the other along to feel it, but it didn't touch anything; then I stopped and looked down—there was no timber there; I looked back towards the sea—the drift had disappeared, the barrels and boxes and truck of one sort or another was gone. There was nothing on shore nor in the water. Now you may laugh, but 'Lige knows whether what I've told you is true."

"Bill, that is a pretty good story, but it is not the one I meant," persisted the individual who had commenced the attack.

"Well, another time, Zeph and I were at work

getting the copper bolts out of an old wreck, when we happened to look up and saw two carriages coming along, up the beach. I spoke to Zeph about it, but as they came along slowly, we went on with our work, and when we looked up again there was only one. That came on closer and closer till I could tell the horses; they were two bays of squire Jones' down at the inlet; they drove right on towards us till they were so near that I did not like to stare the people in the face, and looked down again to my work. There were two men, and I saw them so plain that I should know 'em anywhere. Well, I raised my head a second after, and they were gone; and there never had been any wagon, for Zeph and I hunted all over the beach to find the tracks in the sand."

"I guess that was another misty day, and you hadn't had your eye-opener," was the appreciative response.

"No, it was three o'clock in the day, and bright sunshine; but at that time, as near as can be, Tommy Smith was drowned down at the inlet, and the very next day at the very same hour, the 'Squire's wagon did come up the beach, with the same two men driving, and the body in a box in the back part."

"Now, Bill," continued the persistent individual, "this is all very well, but it is not the story. Come, out with it; you know what I mean."

Bill fell silent, again looking off into the distance as though he saw something that others could not

see; he pulled away nervously on his pipe, which had gone out, but answered not.

"Bill's afraid;" was the tantalizing suggestion.

"There's Sam," said Bill suddenly; "he's not afeard of man or devil; ask him what he saw."

The person referred to was a large, broad-shouldered, pleasant-faced man, with a clear blue eye that looked as though it would not quail easily, and he responded at once:

"I never saw anything; but one night when I was coming by the cove where the Johanna was cast away, and where three hundred bodies were picked up and buried, I heard a loud scream. It sounded like a woman's voice, and was repeated three or four times; but I couldn't find anything, although I spent an hour hunting among the sand-hills, and it was bright moonlight. It may have been some sort of animal, but I don't know exactly what."

"Bill's adventure happened in the same neighborhood, so let's have it," continued the persistent man.

"As Sam says," commenced Bill, at last, "the Johanna went ashore one awful north-easter in winter about six miles above here, near Old Jackey's tavern; she broke up before we could do anything for her, and three hundred men, women, and children—for she was an emigrant ship—were washed ashore during the following week; most of them had been drifted by the set of the tide into the cove, and they were buried there; so you see it ain't a nice place of a dark night.

"I was driving down the beach about a year after she was lost, with my old jagger wagon, and a heavy load on of groceries and stores of one kind or other. It was about one o'clock at night, mighty cold, but bright moonlight; and I was coming along by the corner of the fence, you know, just above Jackey's, when the mare stopped short. Now, she was just the best beast to drive you ever saw. I could drive her into the bay or right over into the ocean, and she was never skeered at anything. But this time, she come right back in the shafts and began to tremble all over; I gave her a touch of the whip, and she was just as full of spirit as a horse need be, but she only reared up and snorted and trembled worse than ever. So I knew something must be wrong, and looked ahead pretty sharp; and there, sure enough, right across the road, lay a man. Jackey was a little too fond of rum at that time, and I made up my mind he had got drunk and tumbled down on his way home; it was cold, and I didn't want to get out of the wagon where I was nicely tucked in, and thought I would drive round out of the road and wake him up with my whip as I passed. I tried to pull the mare off to one side to go by, but she only reared and snorted and trembled, so that I was afraid she would fall. She had a tender mouth, but although I pulled my best I could not budge her; at last, getting mad, I laid the gad over her just as hard as I could draw it. Instead of obeying the rein, however, she plunged straight on, made a tremendous leap over the body, and dragged the wagon

after her. I pulled her in all I knew how, and no mistake; but it was no use, and I felt the front wheels strike, lift, and go over him, and then the hind wheels, but I couldn't stop her. That was a heavy load, and enough to crush any one, and as soon as I could fetch the mare down—for she had started to run—I jumped out quick enough then, you may bet your life. I tied her up to the fence, although she was still so uneasy I daresen't hardly leave her, and hurried back to see if I could do anything for Jackey. Would you believe it, there was nothing there! I tell you I felt the wagon go over him, and what's more, I looked down as I passed and saw his clothes and his hair straggling out over the snow, for he had no hat on; though I noticed at the time that I didn't see any flesh, but supposed his face was turned from me. There was no rise in the ground and not a cloud in the sky; the moon was nearly full, and there wasn't any man, and never had been any man there; but whatever there was, the mare saw it as plain as I did."

"Now let's turn in," said a sleepy individual, who had first been nodding over Bill's statement of public wrongs, and had taken several short naps in the course of his ghost story; "and as there was something said yesterday about a smoke driving away mosquitoes, for heaven's sake let's make a big one; the infernal pests kept me awake all last night."

This was excellent advice, and not only was an entire newspaper consumed in our common sleeping apartment, but a quantity of powder was squibbed

off, till the place smelt like the antechamber of Tartarus. The mosquitoes were expelled or silenced at the cost of a slight suffocation to ourselves, but we gained several hours sleep till the smoke escaped and allowed the villains to return to their prey.

One sporting day resembles another in its essential features, although not often so entirely as with the Englishman, who, having devoted his life to woodcock shooting, and being called upon to relate his experiences, replied that he had shot woodcock for forty years, but never noticed anything worth recording. Our next day, however, was enlivened by sport of an unexpected kind. We had heard there was some dispute about the ownership of the stands; in fact, that the one occupied by my friend and myself belonged to the Ortleys, a family represented as decidedly uninviting; while both Bill and the Ortleys claimed that, where another party was located.

In the disputed stand were Bill, a New York gentleman, who, as events proved, seemed to be something of an athlete, and a sedate, unimpassionable Jersey lawyer of considerable eminence. Elijah was with us, when two villanous, red-haired, freckle-skinned objects presented themselves, and, after some preliminary remarks and a refusal on their part of a friendly glass, which is a desperate sign in a Jerseyman, mildly suggested that they would like a little remuneration for the use of the stand. As their suggestion was moderate, reasonable, and just, and they undoubtedly owned the land, we complied,

and beheld them proceed, to Elijah's great delight, for the same purpose towards the other stand. Elijah prophetically announced they would probably get more than they demanded.

The other stand was distant about a hundred yards, in full view, and we perceived at once that a commotion was caused by the unexpected arrival. The athletic man was shortly seen outside the blind, flinging his arms wildly about in front of the two Ortley brothers, and, as we were afterwards informed, offering to fight either or both of them. Matters then seemed to progress more favorably, till suddenly Bill and the younger Ortley emerged, locked in an unfriendly embrace, and commenced dragging each other round the sand-bank, while the demonstrative sportsman was seen dancing actively in front of the other Ortley, and preventing his interference.

Of course we dropped our guns and hastened across the shallow, intervening water, having just time to perceive that Bill had thrown his adversary and remained on top. The first words we heard were: "Take him off! Oh, my God! take him off. Enough, enough, take him off," from the one on the ground, whose eye—the only vulnerable part to uninstructed anger—Bill was busily endeavoring to gouge out, while the other shouted frantically: "He is killing my brother; let me get to him; he is gouging his eye out. He will kill him, he will kill him."

"Never mind," answered the athletic man, swinging his arms ominously, and dexterously interposing

between the victim and his brother, whenever the latter attempted to dodge past him. "Let him be killed, it would serve him right; he came over here for a fight, and he shall have enough of it if both of his eyes are gouged out."

Elijah arrived in time to prevent the latter catastrophe, and being of a peaceable and humane disposition, pulled off his brother before anything more serious than a little scratching had occurred. In fact, there is no position in which ignorance renders a person more pitiably inefficient, than in fighting; and, while a skilful man could have killed his opponent during the time Bill had enjoyed, the latter had really effected nothing worth mentioning. The ugly wretch was awfully frightened, however; his face being ghostly pale, streaked with bloody red, and he commenced whining at once:

"I am nothing but a boy, only twenty-two last spring, and he's a man grown."

"You know boys have to be whipped to keep them in order," was the consolatory response; for we naturally took part with our landlord.

"Gentlemen, just look at me."

"Don't come so close, you're covered with blood; keep back, keep back."

"But look at me; he's bigger than I am, and I am only a boy."

"Then you shouldn't strike a man."

"Oh! gentlemen, I didn't strike him first, indeed I didn't; he struck me when I wasn't thinking; indeed he did."

"Yes," broke in his brother, who was just recovering from the spell first put upon him by our athlete's continual offers to accommodate him in any way he wished. "Yes, it will be a dear blow for you; I saw you strike him."

"No," said the lawyer, advancing for the first time from behind the blind where he had been an unmoved and impartial umpire of the fray, "you should not say that; your brother certainly struck first; I saw him distinctly." His manner was solemn, and convincing, and conclusive, taken in connexion with his perfect equanimity during the affair; but, of course, he was met by contradiction and protestation from the two brothers. This dispute would have been endless, but at that moment a fine flock of willets was descried advancing towards the stools.

"Down, down," every one shouted, and, true to the bayman's instinct, friend and foe crowded down on the sand together, waiting breathlessly the arrival of the birds. The latter came up handsomely, were received with four barrels, and left several of their number as keepsakes or peace-offerings; for, of course, anger was dissipated, and the defeated enemy retired amid a few merry suggestions, and the excellent advice that they had better not repeat their joke.

Such squabbles—for it can be called nothing graver—lower one's opinion of human kind, and it makes one ashamed to think that two men may hug and pull one another about, and roll on the sand for

fifteen minutes, with the best will in the world to do each other all the damage possible, and only inflict, in the feebleness of uneducated humanity, a few miserable scratches. Any of the lower animals would, in that time, have left serious marks of its anger; but the pitiful results of these human efforts were, that Bill's beard was pulled and Ortley's face scratched. It makes one blush to think he is a man.

As our party returned to the blind we had left, Elijah spoke, softly ruminating aloud:

"Well, it only costs thirty-five dollars anyhow, and it was worth that."

Our humane, peaceable friend, it seems, had been cast in a similar case, and had to pay six cents damages and thirty-five dollars costs of court. There is probably nothing that has so soothing and pacifying an influence on the New Jersey mind as costs of court. The words alone act like a charm upon a Jerseyman in the acme of frenzy, and are as effective as a policeman in uniform. If a man commits assault and battery, he is fined six cents damages and costs of court; if he is guilty of trespass it is the same; if he kisses his neighbor's wife against her will, if he slanders a friend's character, it is always six cents damages and costs of court; and Jerseymen will probably expect in the next world to get off with six cents damages and costs of court.

The shooting was excellent during the whole day, and evening found us collected in the bar-room, well satisfied and particularly jocose over the amusing

pugilistic encounter we had witnessed. It lent point to many a good hit at Bill's expense; even his wife, who is a fine, resolute-looking woman, saying that if she had seen it sooner, she would have taken a broomstick and flogged them both. The general impression was, she could have made her words good.

The pleasure of indulging in fun at the expense of a fellow-creature is very great, and Bill's adventure was certainly fair game. When our wit was exhausted, and the craving for tobacco mollified by the steady use of our pipes, our thoughts and voices turned to our never-wearying passion, and one of the party commenced:

"I have shot a number of the birds you call kriekers; they are a fat bird, but do not seem to stool. I have never before shot them, except occasionally on the meadows."

"They don't stool," said Bill, "and only utter a krieking kind of cry; but in October they come here very thick, and we walk them up over the meadows. Why, you can shoot a hundred a day."

"A most excellent bird they are, too—fat and delicate. They are the latest of the bay-snipe in returning from the summer breeding-places; and as they rise and fly from you, they afford extremely pretty shooting. They are sometimes called short-neck, and are, in a gastronomic point of view, the best bay-snipe that is put upon the table."

"We call the bay-birds usually snipe," said the first speaker; "but I have been told they are not

snipe at all. Refer to Giraud again and give us the truth."

This fell, of course, to my share, and I commenced as follows:

"I read you yesterday about the plovers, and immediately after them we find an account of the turnstone, *strepsilas interpres*, which is nothing else than our beautiful brant-bird or horse-foot snipe, as it is called farther south, because it feeds on the spawn of the horse-foot. This pretty but unfortunate bird belongs to no genus whatever, and has been to the ornithologists a source of great tribulation. They have sometimes considered it a sandpiper and sometimes not, so you may probably call it what you please; and as brant-bird is a rhythmical name, it will answer as well as *strepsilas interpres*; if you have not a fluent tongue, perhaps somewhat better. Of the snipes, or *scolopacidæ*, the only true representative is the dowitcher, *scolopax noveboracensis*.

"Hold on," shouted Bill; "say that last word over again."

"*Noveboracensis*."

"That is only the half of it; let's have the whole."

"*Scolopax noveboracensis*."

"Scoly packs never borrow a census; that is a good sized name for a little dowitch, and beats the radish altogether. Go ahead, we'll learn something before we get through."

"Why, that is only Latin for New York snipe."

"Oh, pshaw!" responded Bill, in intense disgust, "I thought it meant a whole bookful of things."

"The sandpipers, however, come under the family of snipes, and are called *tringæ*. Among these are enumerated the robin-snipe and the grass-plover, as I told you before, the black-breast, the krieker, or short-neck, and several scarcer varieties. The yelpers and yellow-legs, the tiny teeter, and the willet are tattlers, genus *totanus*, while the marlin is the godwit *limosa*. The sickle-bills, jacks, and futes are curlews, genus *numenius*."

"And now that you have got through," grumbled Bill again, "can you whistle a snipe any better or shoot him any easier? Do you know why he stools well in a south-westerly wind, why one stools better than another, or why any of them stool at all? Do you know why he flies after a storm, or why some go in flocks and others don't, or why there is usually a flight on the fifteenth and twenty-fifth of August? When books tell us these things, I shall think more of the writers."

"These matters are not easy to find out; even you gunners, who have been on the bay all your lives, where your fathers lived before you, do not know. But now tell us what other sport you have here."

"On the mainland there are a good many English snipe in spring, while in the fall we catch bluefish and shoot ducks. The black ducks and teal will soon be along; but ever since the inlet was

closed, the canvas-backs and red-heads have been scarce."

"What do you mean by the inlet's closing?"

"There used to be several inlets across the beach —one about ten miles below—and then we had splendid oysters and ducks plenty. There came a tremendous storm one winter that washed up the sand and closed the inlet, and so it has remained ever since."

"Can't they be dredged out?"

"The people would pay a fortune to any man who did that, if he could keep it open. In the fall, we go after ducks twenty miles when we want any great shooting; but we kill a good many round here."

"How do you catch the blue-fish that you spoke of?"

"They chase the bony-fish along the shore, and when they come close in, you can stand on the beach, and throw the squid right among them. I took sixteen hundred pounds in half a day."

"Phew!" was the universal chorus.

"'Lige was there, and he knows whether that is true. They averaged fifteen pounds apiece. On those occasions, the only question is whether you know how to land them, and can do it quick enough."

"Your hands must have been cut to pieces."

"Not at all; you'll never cut your hands if you don't let the line slip."

"Did you run up ashore with them?"

"No, I had no time for that; I landed them, hand over hand."

"Well, after that story it's time we went to bed; so good-night."

During that night the mosquitoes, bad as they had been, were more terrible than at any time previous. Favored by the late frequent rains, they had become more numerous than had ever been known on the beach; and being consequently compelled to subdivide to an unusual degree the ordinarily small supply of food, they were savagely hungry. Sleep was out of the question, and after trying all sorts of devices from gunpowder to mosquito-nets, the party wandered out of doors, and, scattering in search of a place of retreat, afforded an excellent representation of unhappy ghosts on the banks of the Styx. The shore, near the surf, and the bathing-houses had heretofore been tolerably secure resorts, but, on this unprecedented night, a special meeting of mosquitoes seemed to have been called in that neighborhood.

Those that tried the ground, and covered themselves carefully from head to foot, found that the enterprising long-legs disregarded the customary habits of their race, and consented to crawl down their sleeves, up their pants, or through the folds of the blanket. The sand-fleas also were numerous and lively, bounding about in an unpleasantly active way; and where there were neither mosquitoes nor sand-fleas, the nervous sufferer imagined every grain

of stray sand that sifted in through his clothes to be some malignant, blood-sucking, insect.

One great advantage, however, followed from this discomfort—that we were up betimes next morning and ready for sport that soon proved equal to any we had experienced. In fact, so steady and well sustained a flight of large birds was extremely rare; before our arrival the shooting had been good, and since excellent. There was a repetition to a great extent of the day previous, in many particulars of flight, number, and character of birds; in infinite modification of circumstance, there was an incessant variety of bewildering sport.

No two birds ever approach the sportsman's stand in precisely the same way, and there is one round of deliciously torturing uncertainty; the flock we are most certain of may turn off, the one that has passed and been given up, may return; the bird that has been carefully covered may escape, another that seems a hopeless chance may fall: it is these minute differences, and this continual variety, that lend the principal charm to the sportsman's life.

At midday came again the congregation at the house, the discussion over sporting topics, the joke or story, and the comparison of luck. Thus passed the days, alike, yet different, affording undiminished pleasure, excitement, and instruction, with sport admirably adapted to the hot weather, when the cool, shady swamps are deserted by the woodcock. The English snipe have not yet arrived upon the meadows, and the fall shooting is still in prospective;

the labor is easy, the body can be kept cool by wading for dead birds, and to those who are, at the best, not vigorous, bay-snipe shooting is a delightful resource.

Never did mortals pass a pleasanter week than that week at the beach, and it is impossible to chronicle all the good shots, to repeat all the amusing stories or merry jokes, or to record all the valuable instruction; and to obtain an inkling even, the reader had better make a firm resolve that next August will not pass over his head without his devoting at least one week to bay-snipe shooting. When at last the time came to part, and the baggage was packed, and the guns reluctantly bestowed in their cases, we bade our farewell with sincere regret, praying that often thereafter might we have such sport, and meet such companionship.

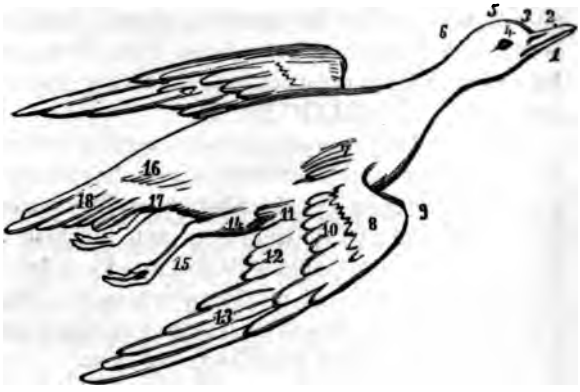
It is a long journey to the beach, but it is a longer one back again; no high hopes buoy up the traveller, regrets accompany him instead—no anticipation of grand sport, but the gloomy certainty that it is over for the year; and although the conveyance to the beach is irregular, there is absolutely none away from it. It is true there are several different routes to and from it, but all by private conveyance, and, rendered by the mosquitoes nearly impracticable.

Bill harnessed his ponies—for, wonderful to say, a few horses and cattle manage to live on the beach and sustain existence in spite of the mosquitoes—and we stowed ourselves and our luggage in his well worn wagon. The road lay over the barren beach,

deep and heavy with sand, and hardly distinguishable after a heavy rain; the one-story shanty, that had been our resting-place, soon faded from view, and we had nothing in prospect but the dreary journey home.

At the head of the beach we encountered a bathing-party, and were sorely tempted to join the rollicking girls in a frolic among the breakers; but, by exerting great self-denial, and shutting our eyes to their attractions, much to my companion's disgust, we kept on our course. We dined at the tavern on the road, and having bade farewell to Bill, and engaged another team, we reached Crab Town by dusk.

How changed the village seemed to us! Where was the precious and beautiful freight that had paid us such delicious toll? Our eyes peered up and down the road, and into the windows of the scattered houses; our ears listened sharply for the music of merry voices and ringing laughter; our thoughts reverted to that crowded stage, which had so lately borne us through the village. The road was vacant and desolate; all sound was hushed and still; graceful forms, clad in yielding drapery, were nowhere to be seen; the dull lights in the windows revealed nothing to our earnest gaze. Our lovely companions were invisible, although we pursued our search persistently till late at night, when, weary and disconsolate, we crawled up to bed in a dismal hostelry kept by Huntsinger. Going sporting into Jersey is delightful, but returning is sad indeed.



1. Lower mandible.
2. Upper mandible.
3. Forehead.
4. Loral space.
5. Crown of the head.
6. Hind part of the head.
7. Scapulars — long feathers from shoulders over sides of back.
8. Smaller wing coverts.
9. Bend of the wing
10. Larger wing coverts.
11. Tertials, arising from the second bone of the wing at the elbow-joint.
12. Secondaries, from the second bone of the wing.
13. Primaries, from the first bone of the wing.
14. Tibia, the thigh.
15. Tarsus, the shank.
16. Upper tail coverts.
17. Lower tail coverts.
18. Tail feathers.

The length of a bird is measured from the extremity of the bill to the end of the longest tail feather; the length of the wing is measured from the bend to the tip of the longest quill.

CHAPTER V.

BAY-BIRDS.

ALTHOUGH a cursory account of the various bay-birds, their habits and peculiarities, has been given in a previous chapter, it seems desirable to add a more complete, exhaustive, and specific description. This is attempted in the following pages, and although the ornithological characteristics are taken from *Giraud's Birds of Long Island*, which seems to have been the resource of all our sporting writers, nothing else is derived from him; but the facts are stated, either upon personal knowledge, which is generally the case, or upon reliable information.

As to the abundance or scarcity of any particular species, the experience of sportsmen will differ according to the accident of flight, or the locality of their favorite sporting-ground; and in relation to their shyness or gentleness, much depends upon the time of year and the condition of the weather. In consequence of the confusion of nomenclature, it has been deemed advisable to give the scientific description of the common species, each one being placed under its most appropriate name, and to collect together as many designations as could be found to have been applied to them respectively. Nevertheless, many names will no doubt be omitted, and

there will be other birds, and some quite common varieties, that, among bay-men, have no names whatever.

It is not intended to furnish a description of all the species of shore-snipe that occasionally are killed, but to supply such information as will enable the sportsman to distinguish the ordinary varieties; and such facts as have not been fully stated, which are more especially applicable to certain members of this great class, are grouped together under separate heads. Nothing is expected to be added to the ornithological learning of the world, and only such portions of that science are given as may be considered desirable for the ready use of the sportsman in the intelligent pursuit of his pleasures.

Plovers.

Genus Charadrius, Linn.

Generic distinctions.—Bill short, strong, straight, about the length of the head, which is rather large and prominent in front; eyes large; body full; neck short and rather thick; wings long; tail rounded and of moderate length; toes connected at the base; hind toe wanting, or consisting of a small knob.

Black-Breast.

Bull-Headed Plover. Beetle-Headed Plover. Black-Bellied Plover.

Charadrius Helveticus, Wils.

This bird is killed along our bays indiscriminately with the other snipe, although it does not stool as

well as the marlin or yellow-legs. It passes north early in May, when it is often called the black-bellied plover, and regarded from its plumage as a distinct variety from the fall bird; it is then quite shy. In August or September it returns, being more plentiful in the latter month, and is often found in great numbers especially at Montauk Point; and at that period the young, being quite fat, are regarded as delicious eating. It is then greyer in appearance and not so strongly colored as when in full plumage. Before the main flight arrives, scattering individuals are heard uttering their peculiar beautiful and shrill cry, and are seen shyly approaching the stools, or darting round not far off, and yet afraid to draw close to them. Its head is large and round, giving rise to the name of bull-head, which is common on the coast of New Jersey, although in New York it is generally known as black-breast.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill stout, along the gap one inch and five-sixteenths; length of tarsi one inch and five-eighths. Adult male with the bill black, strong, shorter than the head; cheeks, loral space, throat, fore-neck, breast, with a large portion of the abdomen black; hind part of the abdomen and flanks white; forehead, with a broad band passing down the sides of the neck and breast, white; crown, occiput, and hind-neck greyish white, spotted with dusky; upper parts blackish-brown, the feathers broadly tipped with white; eye encircled with white; tail and upper tail-coverts white, barred with black, the former tipped with white; lower tail-coverts

white, the outer feather spotted with black; primaries and their coverts blackish-brown, the latter margined with white; primary shafts about two-thirds from the base, white, tips blackish-brown; part of the inner webs of the outer primaries white; both webs of the inner primaries partially white; secondaries white at the base, margined at the same; feet black; toes connected by a membrane. Female smaller. Young with the upper plumage greyish-brown, the feathers spotted with white; throat, fore-neck, and upper part of the breast greyish-white, streaked with dusky; rest of the lower parts white. Length of adult male eleven inches and three quarters, wing seven and a half."—*Giraud's Birds of Long Island.*

American Golden Plover.

Frost Bird, Greenback.

Charadrius Pluvialis, Wils.

This bird furnishes great sport at Montauk Point, when the fortunate sportsman happens to arrive after a fierce north-easter early in September and during one of those wonderful flights that occasionally occur. They come readily to the decoys which are placed in the open upland fields, and were once killed in great numbers on Hempstead plains before cultivation ejected them. A large number of decoys should be used, for they are not so easily seen as when set in the water. After alighting, the golden plover runs with great activity in pursuit of the

insects, mostly grasshoppers, on which it feeds; and when killed it constitutes a prime delicacy for the table, and brings a high price in market. It passes to the northward in the latter part of April, and returns in the early part of September. Its general color on the back is greenish, and it has a distinct light stripe alongside of the eye. They often congregate in immense numbers, and I have certainly seen a thousand in a flock.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill rather slender; along the gap one inch and an eighth; tarsi one and nine-sixteenths. Adult with the bill black, much slighter than *C. helveticus*; forehead, and a band over the eye, extending behind the eye, white; upper parts, including the crown, brownish-black, the feathers marked with spots of golden yellow and dull white; quills and coverts dark greyish-brown; secondaries paler —the inner margined with yellowish-white; tail feathers greyish-brown, barred with paler, the central with dull yellow; shafts of the wing quills white towards the end, which, with their bases, are dark brown; lower parts brownish-black, though in general we find them mottled with brown, dull white, and black; lower tail-coverts white, the lateral marked with black; feet bluish-grey. Late in autumn, the golden markings on the upper parts are not so distinct, and the lower parts are greyish-blue. Length, ten inches and a half, wing seven and one-eighth."—*Giraud.*

Beach-Bird.

Piping Plover.

Charadrius Hiaticula, Wils.

The beach-bird, as its name implies, prefers the beaches to the meadows, and follows each retreating wave of ocean surf in pursuit of its prey, escaping with amazing agility from the next swell. It is a pretty little bird, not often associating in flocks, and on hazy days coming well to the decoys, which should be placed near to the surf, while the sportsman conceals himself by digging a hollow in the loose sand. Although these birds are small, they are plump and well flavored, and when flying rapidly on a level with the flashing breakers, amid the noise and confusion of old ocean's roar, are by no means easy to kill. They are present with us more or less all summer, their diminutive size tending to protect them from destruction.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill shorter than the head; at base orange color, towards the end black; foreneck and cheeks pure white, bordered above with black; rest of the head very pale brown. Adult male with the bill short, orange at the base, anterior to the nostrils black; forehead white, with a band of black crossing directly above; upper part of the head, hind neck, back, scapulars, and wing coverts, pale brown; rump white, the central feathers tinged with brown; tail brown, white at base, tipped with the same; lateral feathers pure white—the next with a spot of blackish-brown near the end; upper tail

coverts white; primaries brown; a large portion of the inner webs white; a spot of the same on the outer webs of the inner quills; secondaries white, with a large spot of brown towards the ends; lower surface of the wings white, a black band round the lower part of the neck, broadest on the sides where it terminates; entire lower plumage white. Female similar, with the band on the neck brown. Length seven inches, wing four and a half."—*Giraud.*

Kildeer.

Charadrius Vociferus, Wils.

A worthless bird, furnishing no sport, and poor eating.

"*Specific Character.*—A band on the forehead passing back to the eye; a line over the eye, upper part of the neck all round, and a band on the lower part of the fore-neck, white; above and below the latter, a broad black band; rump and upper tail-coverts orange red. Adult with the bill black; at the base a band of blackish-brown; on the forehead a band of white passing back to the eye; directly above a band of black; rest of the head brown, with a band of white behind the eye; throat white; a broad band of the same color encircling the upper part of the neck; middle of the neck encircled with black, much broader on the fore-neck; below which, on the fore-neck, a band of white, followed by a band of black on the lower neck, the feathers of which are tipped with white, of which color are the breast,

abdomen, under tail-coverts, and sides, the latter faintly tinged with yellow; tail rather long, rounded; the outer feathers white, barred with brownish-black, their tips white, with a single spot of blackish-brown on the outer web; the rest pale reddish-brown at the base, changing into brownish-black towards the ends, which are white; some of the inner feathers tipped with yellowish-brown; the middle feathers are plain brown, with a darker spot towards the ends, which are slightly tipped with white; upper tail-coverts and rump reddish-brown, the latter brighter; upper parts brown, the feathers margined with reddish-brown; primaries dark brown, with a large portion of the inner web white; a spot of the same color on the outer webs towards the tips, excepting the first two; their coverts blackish-brown tipped with white; secondaries white, with a large spot of brown towards the ends; their tips, with those of the primaries, white; secondary coverts brown, broadly tipped with white. Length ten inches, wing seven inches."—*Giraud.*

SANDERLING.

Charadrius Rubidus, Wils.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill straight, black, along the gap one inch and one-eighth; length of tarsi one inch; hind toe wanting. Adult with the bill straight, about as long as the head. Spring plumage, upper parts, with the throat, fore-neck, and upper part of the breast rufous, intermixed with dusky and grey-

ish white; deeper red on the back; lower part of the breast, abdomen, and sides of the body pure white; tarsi and feet black; claws small, compressed; primaries, outer webs, black; inner webs light brown; shafts brown at the base, tips black, rest parts white; secondaries light brown, broadly margined with white. Winter dress, lower parts white; upper parts greyish-white, intermixed with black or dusky, darkest on the back. Length seven inches and three-quarters, wing four and seven-eighths."—*Giraud.*

Turnstone.

Genus Strepsilas.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill shorter than the head, strong, tapering, compressed, and blunt; neck rather short; body full; wings long, of moderate breadth, and pointed; tail round, rather short, and composed of twelve feathers; tarsus equal to the middle toe, and rather stout; hind toe small, fore-toes free, with a narrow margin.

Brant-Bird.

Horse-foot Snipe, Turnstone, Beach-Robins.

Strepsilas Interpres.

This is a beautiful bird, and stools pretty well, but is rare and mostly solitary; its young are at Egg Harbor sometimes termed beach-birds. The brant-bird is considered good eating. It feeds on the eggs of the king-crab or horse-foot, which it digs up by jumping in the air and striking with both its feet at

once into the sand, thus scratching a hole about three inches deep and an inch and a half across.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill black; feet orange; the head and sides of the neck streaked and patched with black and white; fore part of the neck and upper portion of the sides of the breast, black; lower parts, hind part of the back, and upper tail-coverts white; rump dusky; rest of the upper parts reddish-brown, mottled with black; primaries dusky; a band across the wings and the throat white. Young with the head and neck all round, fore part of the back, and sides of the breast, dusky brown, streaked and margined with greyish-white; wing-coverts and tertials broadly margined with dull reddish-brown. It can at all times be identified by its having the throat, lower parts, hind part of the back, and the upper tail-coverts white, and the feathers on the rump dusky. Adult with the bill black, throat white, sides of the head mottled with black and white; crown streaked with black on white ground; on the hind neck a patch of white; a patch of black on the sides of the neck, of which color are the fore-neck and the sides of the breast; lower parts white; tail blackish-brown, white at the base, of which color are the lateral feathers, with a spot of black on the inner vanes near the end—the rest margined with reddish-brown, and tipped with white; upper tail-coverts white; hind part of the back white; the feathers on the rump black; fore part of the back mottled with black and reddish-brown; primaries dark brown, inner webs white;

secondaries broadly edged with white, forming a band on the wings; outer secondary coverts reddish-brown, inner black; outer scapulars white, with dusky spots; inner scapulars reddish-brown. In winter the colors are duller. Length nine inches, wing five and three-quarters."—*Giraud.*

Sandpiper.

Genus Tringa.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill straight, slender, and tapering, compressed towards the end, and but little longer than the head; body rather full; wings very long and pointed; tail rather short and nearly even; tarsi moderate; hind toe very small, and sometimes wanting; fore toes slender, of moderate length, and generally divided.

Robin-Snipe.

Red-breasted Sandpiper.

Tringa Cinerea, Wils. Winter.

Tringa Rufa, Wils. Spring.

This delicious and beautiful bird, although far from plentiful, furnishes excellent sport, coming readily to stool, and flying regularly and steadily. It mostly affects the marshy islands lying between the salt water creeks, and derives its name from a fancied resemblance to the robin, as he is termed among us. It is always gentle, occasionally abundant, and generally fat and tender; by reason of its

steady flight it is not difficult to kill; and its food, mostly shell-fish, does not contribute an unpleasant flavor to its flesh. It arrives from the north about the middle of August, and often lingers for some time on the meadows. As the season advances its plumage becomes paler, till it acquires the name of white robin-snipe—although I have often seen them late in August of the most beautiful and strongly marked coloring, the breast being a rich brownish red and the back a fine grey.

The robin-snipe is of about the size of the dow-itcher, with a shorter and more pointed bill, and is killed indiscriminately on the stools with the other bay-birds. Its call consists of two notes, and is sharp and clear; when well imitated, it will often attract the confiding snipe to the gunner, exposed in full view, and without decoys. This bird is very beautiful, and a great favorite.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill straight, longer than the head; tarsi one inch and three-sixteenths long; rump and upper tail-coverts white, barred with dark brown; region of the vent and the lower tail-coverts white, with dusky markings. In spring the upper parts are ash-grey, variegated with black and pale yellowish-red; lower parts, including the throat and fore-neck, brownish-orange. In autumn the upper parts are ash-grey, margined with dull white; rump and upper tail-coverts barred with black and white; lower parts white; the sides of the body marked with dusky; a dull white line over the eye. Adult in spring—bill black; a broad band of reddish

brown commences at the base of the upper mandible, extends half-way to the eye, where it changes to reddish-brown; upper part of head and the hind neck dusky, the feathers margined with greyish white—a few touches of pale reddish-brown on the latter; throat, fore-neck, breast, and abdomen reddish-brown; vent white; lower tail coverts white, spotted with dusky; upper plumage blackish-brown, upper tail-coverts barred with black and white; tail pale brown, margined with white; primary coverts black, tipped with white; secondary coverts greyish-brown, margined with white. Young with the upper parts greyish-brown; the feathers with central dusky streaks, a narrow line of cinnamon-color towards their margins, which are dull white; the lower parts ash-grey. Length of adult, ten inches; wing, six and three-quarters."—*Giraud.*

Upland Plover.

Grey, Grass, or Field Plover.

Bartram's Sandpiper.

Tringa Bartramia, Wils.

This bird, although scientifically not a plover, is, by its habits, entitled to an appellation that common consent has bestowed upon it. It is found upon the uplands, never frequenting the marshes except by crossing them while migrating, and feeds, not on shell-fish or the innumerable minute insects that live in sand and salt mud, but on the grasshoppers and seeds of the open fields. It never takes the slightest

notice of the stools, is comparatively a solitary bird, and although continually uttering its melodious cry, does not heed a responsive call.

On the eastern extremity of Long Island, and along the coast of New England, are vast rolling and hilly stretches of land, where there are no trees and little vegetation, besides a short thin grass, and here the plovers rest and feed. They migrate to the southward in August, and appear about the same time scattered from Nantucket to New Jersey. In spite of their shyness and the difficulty of killing them, they are pursued relentlessly by man with every device that he finds will outwit their cunning or deceive their vigilance.

Rhode Island has long been one of their favorite resorts, but has been overrun with gunners, who follow the vocation either for sport or pleasure, and there, for many years, the grey plover were killed in considerable quantities. Many are still found in the same locality, or further east, as well as at Montauk Point; but at Hempstead Plains, where they were once found quite numerous, they appear no longer; and the eastern shore of New Jersey being unsuited to their habits, they rarely sojourn or even pause upon it. They travel as well by night as by day; and in the still summer nights their sweet trilling cry may be heard at short intervals; while during the day they will often be seen in small bodies, or singly, winging their way rapidly towards the south.

They are wary, fly rapidly, and are difficult to shoot, and, were it not for one peculiarity, would

escape almost scatheless. Alighting only in the open fields, where the thin grass reveals every enemy and exposes every approaching object to their view; readily alarmed at the first symptom of danger, and shunning the slightest familiarity with man, they are impossible to reach except with laborious and painful creeping that no sportsman cares to undertake. Not sufficiently gregarious or friendly in their nature to desire the company of wooden decoys, they cannot be lured within gunshot; and it is only through their confidence in their fellow-beasts that their destruction can be accomplished.

A horse, they know, has no evil design, does not live on plover, and may be permitted to come and go as he pleases; a horse drawing a wagon is to be pitied, not feared; and, most fortunately, the birds cannot conceive that a man would be mean enough to hide in that wagon, and drive that horse in an ingenious manner round and round them, every time narrowing the circle till he gets within shot. Man, however, is ready for any subterfuge to gain his plover; and, seated on the tail-board, or a place behind prepared for the purpose, he steps to the ground the moment the wagon stops, and as the bird immediately rises, fires—being often compelled, in spite of his ingenuity, to take a long shot.

Even in this mode no large number of birds is killed, and by creeping or stalking few indeed are obtained. One inventive genius made an imitation cow of slats and canvas painted to represent the living animal, and, mounting it upon his shoulders,

was often able to approach without detection; when near enough, or if the bird became alarmed, he cast off his false skin and used his fowling-piece. This was certainly an original and successful mode of modifying an idea derived from the times of ancient Troy.

This bird is so delicious and so highly prized by the epicure, that no pains are spared in its capture; it is by many superior judges regarded as the richest and most delicately flavored of the birds of America; while its timid and wary disposition renders it the most difficult to kill. It is, therefore, justly esteemed the richest prize of the sportsman and the gourmand, and holds as high a rank in the field as in the market.

It is not, properly speaking, a bay-bird; but as it is frequently shot from the stand when passing near the decoys, these few remarks concerning it are inserted. It is essentially an upland bird, although from the nature of its migration it passes along the coast and occasionally far out at sea.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill slender, rather longer than the head; tarsi one inch and seven-eighths; neck rather long, slender; axillars distinctly barred with black and greyish-white; upper parts dark brown, margined with yellowish-brown; fore-neck and fore part of the breast with arrow-shaped markings; rest of the lower parts yellowish-white. Adult with the bill slender, yellowish-green, dusky at the tip; upper part of the head dark brown, with a central yellowish-brown line, the feathers mar-

ginced with the same color; hind part and sides of the neck yellowish-brown, streaked with dusky; fore part of the neck and breast paler, with pointed streaks of dusky; sides of the body barred with the same; rest of lower parts yellowish-white; lower wing-coverts white, barred with brownish-black; upper plumage dark-brown, margined with yellowish-brown, darker on the hind part of the back; primaries dark-brown; coverts the same color; inner webs of the primaries barred with white, more particularly on the first—the shaft of which is white; the rest brown, all tipped with white; secondaries more broadly tipped with the same; coverts and scapulars dark-brown, margined with yellowish-brown, and tipped with white; tail barred with black and yellowish-brown, tipped with white; middle feathers darker, tipped with black. Length ten inches and a half, wing six and five-eighths."—*Giraud.*

Red-Backed Sandpiper.

Winter Snipe.—Black-breast.

Tringa Alpina, Wils.

This bird absolutely has no common name.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill about one-third longer than the head, bent towards the end; length of tarsi, one inch. Adult with the bill black—one-third longer than the head, slightly bent towards the end, and rather shorter than that of T. Subarquata; upper part of the head, back, and scapular, chestnut-

red, the centre of each feather black, which color occupies a large portion of the scapulars; wing-coverts and quills greyish-brown; the bases and tips of the secondaries and parts of the outer webs of the middle primaries, white; forehead, sides of the head, and hind neck, pale reddish-grey, streaked with dusky; fore neck and upper part of breast greyish-white, streaked with dusky; on the lower part of the breast a large black patch; abdomen white; lower tail coverts white, marked with dusky; tail light-brownish grey, streaked—the central feathers darker.

"Winter dress, upper parts brownish-grey; throat, greyish-white; fore part and sides of neck, sides of the head, and sides of the body, pale brownish-grey, faintly streaked with darker; rest of the lower parts white. Length, seven inches and a half; wing, four and an eighth."—*Giraud.*

Long-Legged Sandpiper.

Peep, Blind Snipe, Frost Snipe, Stilt.

Tringa Himantopus.

This bird also is nameless: it is rare, although I have killed quite a number of them, and I believe its numbers are increasing; it rarely consorts in flocks of more than five or six, stools readily, and is often mistaken for the yellow-legs.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill about one-third longer than the head, slightly arched; length of tarsi, one inch and three-eighths. Adult, with the upper parts

brownish-black, the feathers margined with reddish-white; the edges of the scapulars with semiform markings of the same; rump and upper tail-coverts white, transversely barred with dusky; tail, light grey, the feathers white at the base and along the middle; primary quills and coverts brownish-black—inner tinged with grey; the shaft of the outer primary, white; secondaries, brownish-grey, margined with reddish-white, the inner dusky; a broad whitish line over the eye; loral space dusky; auriculars, pale brownish-red; fore part and sides of neck, greyish white, tinged with red, and longitudinally streaked with dusky; the rest of the lower parts, pale reddish, transversely barred with dusky; the middle of the breast and the abdomen without markings; legs long and slender, of a yellowish-green color. In autumn, the plumage duller, of a more greyish appearance, and the reddish markings wanting, excepting on the sides of the head, and a few touches on the scapular. Length, nine inches; wing, five."—*Giraud.*

Ring-neck.

American Ring Plover.

Tringa Hiaticula, Wils.

This is a small, but delicate, fat, and pretty bird; it does not stool well, and accompanies the small snipe.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill shorter than the head; base, orange color, towards the point, black; a broad band on the forehead white, margined below with

a narrow black band, above with a broad band of the same color; rest part of the head wood-brown; lateral toes connected by a membrane as far as the first joint; inner toes, about half that distance. Adult male with the bill flesh color at base, anterior to the nostrils black; a line of black commences at the base of the upper mandible, passes back to the eye, curving downward on the sides of the neck; a band on the fore part of the head pure white; fore part of crown, black; occiput, wood-brown; chin, throat, and fore neck, passing round on the hind neck, pure white; directly below, on the lower portion of the neck, a broad band of black; upper plumage, wood-brown; primaries, blackish-brown; shafts, white—blackish-brown at their tips; secondaries slightly edged with white on the inner webs; outer webs, nearest to the shafts, an elongated spot of white; wing-coverts wood-brown; secondary coverts broadly tipped with white; breast, abdomen, sides, and lower tail-coverts, pure white; tail brown, lighter at the base; outer feathers white—the rest broadly tipped with white, excepting the middle pair, which are slightly tipped with the same. Female similar, with the upper part of the head and the band on the neck brown. Length, seven inches and a quarter; wing five."—*Giraud.*

Krieker.

Meadow Snipe, Fat Bird, Short Neck, Jack Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper.

Tringa Pectoralis, Aud.

This is an excellent bird, remaining in the meadows till October, and becoming fat, rich, and fine flavored, but unfortunately it will not come to the stools. Although frequently associating in flocks, it can hardly be said to be truly gregarious, and is as often found with the different varieties of small snipe as with its own number. It is quite a difficult bird to kill when on the wing, its flight being rapid and irregular, and its size small; but when it becomes fat and lazy, after a long residence in well supplied feeding-grounds, not only is its flight slower and itself easier to hit, but it is often shot sitting. Its general color is grey, with white on the abdomen; and its size varies greatly according to its age and condition, some being of more than double the size of others. As a natural consequence, considerable practice is required to distinguish it readily from the ox-eyes by which it is often surrounded, when the meadow grass hides it, in a measure, from view. It feeds and dwells altogether in the meadows, finding its food in the stagnant water collected upon their surface, and is only plentiful when these are wet. When alarmed, it rises rapidly, and makes off in a zigzag way, that reminds the sportsman of the flight of English snipe; and early in the season it is wild and shy. It occasionally passes over the stools, but

never pauses or seems to notice them; and for this reason, in spite of its epicurean recommendations, it is generally neglected. In the cool days of September and October, when the mosquitoes have succumbed in a measure to the frost, its pursuit over the open meadows is pleasant and exhilarating. It is often killed to the number of eighty in a day, and is so fat that its body is absolutely round.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill straight, base orange-green; length of tarsi one inch and one-sixteenth; upper parts brownish-black, edged with reddish-brown; throat white; fore part of neck and upper part of the breast light brownish-grey, streaked with dusky; rest of lower parts, including the lower tail-coverts, white. Adult with the bill straight; top of the head dark-brown, intermixed with black; sides of the head, neck, and a large portion of the breast, greyish-brown, streaked with dusky; chin white; a streak of dark brown before the eye, continuing to the nostril, directly above a faint line of white; back dark-brown; feathers margined with white; primary quills dark-brown—shaft of the first white; outer secondaries slightly edged with white; tail-feathers brown, margined with brownish-white —two middle feathers darker, longest, and more pointed; lower part of the breast, abdomen, and sides of the body and under tail-coverts white; feet dull yellow; tibia bare, about half the length. Female, the general plumage lighter. Length nine inches and a half, wing five and a quarter."—*Giraud.*

Ox-Eye.

Tringa Semipalmata, Wils.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill rather stout, broad towards the point; along the gap about one inch; length of tarsi seven-eighths of an inch; bill and legs black; toes half webbed. Adult with the bill slender, about the length of the head—dark-green, nearly approaching to black; head, sides, and hind-part of neck ash-grey, streaked with dusky; upper parts blackish-brown, the feathers edged with greyish-white; secondary coverts tipped with white; primary coverts brownish-black, as are the feathers on the rump; upper tail-coverts the same; wing-quills dusky, their shafts white; tail-feathers ash-grey, the inner webs of the middle pair much darker; over the eye a white line; lower parts white; legs black. Length six inches and a half, wing four."—*Giraud.*

This and the following variety are generally confounded by bay-men; and being too small to demand much consideration, and never shot unless huddled together, so that a large number may be bagged, they are called promiscuously by the odd name ox-eye. They are fat, and almost as good eating when in prime order as the reed-bird.

Ox-Eye.

Wilson's Sandpiper.

Tringa Pusilla, Wils.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill along the gap three-

quarters of an inch, slender; tarsi three-quarters of an inch; legs yellowish-green. Adult with the bill brownish-black; upper part of the breast grey-brown, mixed with white; back and upper parts black; the whole plumage above broadly edged with bright bay and yellow ochre; primaries black —greater coverts the same, tipped with white; tail rounded, the four exterior feathers on each side dull white—the rest dark-brown; tertials as long as the primaries; head above dark-brown, with paler edges; over the eye a streak of whitish; belly and vent white. Length five inches and a half, wing three and a half. With many of our birds we observe that individuals of the same species vary in length, extent, and sometimes differ slightly in their bills, even with those which have arrived at maturity.—On consulting ornithological works, we notice that there are no two writers whose measurement is in all cases alike. With specimens of the Wilson's sandpiper, we find in their proportions greater discrepancy than in many other species—and out of these differences we are inclined to the opinion that two spurious species have been created."—*Giraud.*

Tatler.

Genus Totanus.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill longer than the head, straight, hard and slender; neck slender, and both it and body rather long; wings long and pointed; tail short and rounded; legs long; hind-toe very small,

and the anterior ones connected at the base by webs, the inner being slightly webbed.

Willet.

Semipalmated Tatler.

Totanus Semipalmatus, Lath.

Scolopax Semipalmata, Wils.

This is a fine, large, and beautiful bird; the sharply distinct white and black of its wings contrasting admirably with the reddish-brown tints of the marlin and sickle-bills with which it often associates; it stools well, flying steadily, and often returning after the first, and even second visit; but even when fat, it is tough and ill-flavored. It congregates in large flocks, and reaches the Middle States on its southern journey in the latter part of August. Its cry is a fierce wild shriek, which is rarely, if ever, accurately imitated; but it responds to the call of the sickle-bill, and when once headed for the stools, rarely alters its course. In exposed situations it is shy and difficult of approach, like most of the shore-birds, which, although they come up so unsuspiciously to the decoys, are wary of the gunner, and rarely permit him to crawl within range of them.

"*Specific Character.*—Secondaries and basal part of the primaries white; toes connected at base by broad membranes. Adult with the head and neck brown, intermixed with greyish-white; breast and sides of the body spotted, and waved with brown

on white ground; abdomen white; tail-coverts white, barred with brown; tail greyish-brown, barred with darker brown—the outer two feathers lighter; rump brown; fore part of the back and wing-coverts brown, largely spotted with dull white; primaries blackish-brown, broadly banded with white; secondaries white. Length fifteen inches and a half, wing eight."—*Giraud.*

YELPER.

Big Yellow-Legs—Greater Yellow-Shanks—Tell-tale Tatler.

Totanus Vociferus, Wils.

This is one of the most numerous of the bay-birds, and among the most highly prized for its sport-conferring properties. It stools well, although occasionally suspicious, and will often drop like a stone from the clouds, where it is fond of flying, upon receiving a response to its strong, clear, and easily imitated cry. It will also frequently come within shot in the open, when the sportsman is unaided by his decoys. Its flight is uneven, being often slow when approaching or pausing over the stools, and then exceedingly rapid and irregular when alarmed; and if there are no stools to make the Yelper hesitate, it has a bobbing motion, as if searching for the origin of the call, that makes it exceedingly difficult to kill. Moreover, it is vigorous, and will carry off much shot, as in fact is the habit with all the shore-birds, and is tough and sedgy on the table.

It does not associate in large flocks, but roams about in parties of three or four.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill along the ridge two and a quarter inches; tarsi two and a half; legs yellow. Adult with the bill black, at the base bluish; upper part of the head, loral space, cheeks, and neck, streaked with brownish-black and white; throat white; a white line from the bill to the eye; a white ring round the eye; breast and abdomen white, spotted and barred with brownish-black; sides and tail-coverts the same; lower surface of the primaries light grey—upper brownish-black, the inner spotted white; wing-coverts and back brown, spotted with white, and dusky; scapulars the same; tail brown, barred with white. Winter plumage, the upper parts lighter—larger portion of the breast and abdomen white; sides of the body barred with dusky. Length, fourteen inches; wing, seven and a quarter."—*Giraud.*

Yellow-Legs.

Little Yellow-Legs—Yellow-Shanks Tatler.

Totanus Flavipes, Lath.

Scolopax Flavipes, Wilson.

This bird in appearance is almost identical with the yelper, except that it is much smaller, not being more than half as large. It has several calls, consisting of one or more flute-like and shrill notes, which are rather difficult to imitate. It is probably the most plentiful of all the bay-snipe, making its summer visit in July, and continuing to arrive till

late in September. It collects in immense flocks, and stools excellently, but its flight is irregular and rapid, and when frightened, it darts about in a confusing way that often baffles the sportsman. When wounded it will swim away, and, if possible, crawl into the grass to hide.

Although a pleasant bird to shoot, it is unattractive on the table, even when in best condition, unless killed along the fresh water, where it attains an agreeable and delicate flavor. Both it and the yelper are found in considerable numbers on the marshy shores of the western lakes, where it and the other smaller bay-birds are called, indiscriminately, plover.

Wonderful stories are told of the number of yellow-legs killed at one shot, and as it is a small bird, these are probably not exaggerated. By Wilson the yellow-legs, the yelper, and willet are classed among the *Scolopacidæ*, or snipe, but the other ornithologists have erected a separate genus for them.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill along the ridge one inch and three-eighths; length of tarsi one inch and seven-eighths; legs yellow. Adult with the bill black; throat white; upper part of the head, lores, cheeks, hind part and side parts of the neck, deep brownish-grey, streaked with greyish-white; eye encircled with white, a band of the same color from the bill to the eye; fore neck, sides of the body, and upper part of the breast, greyish-white, streaked with greyish-brown; lower part of the breast and abdomen white; lower tail-coverts white, the outer

feathers barred with brown; scapulars and fore part of the back brown, the feathers barred and spotted with black and white; primaries blackish-brown, the shaft of the outer brownish-white, whiter towards the tip, the rest dark-brown; secondaries margined with white; hind part of the back brownish-grey; tail barred with greyish-brown, white at the tip; legs, feet, and toes, yellow; claws black. Length, ten inches and three-quarters; wing, six. Young with the legs greenish—and by those who have not recognised it as the young of the year, I have heard the propriety of its name questioned."—*Giraud.*

Godwit.

Genus Limosa.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill very long, a little recurved from the middle, rather slender, and with the lower mandible the shorter. Wings long and very acute; tail short and even; legs long; toes four, and rather slender, the hind one being small and the middle toe the longest; anterior toes connected at the base by webs, the outer web being much the larger.

Marlin.

Great Marbled Godwit.

Limosa Fedoa, Linn.

Scolopax Fedoa, Wils.

This is the gentlest and most abundant of the

large birds, approaching the decoys with great confidence and returning again and again, till frequently the entire flock is killed. In color it is a reddish-brown, lighter on the abdomen, and its flight is steady and rather slow. Although better eating than the willet, and very rich and juicy, its flesh cannot be called delicate. The ring-tailed marlin or Hudsonian Godwit, *Limosa Hudsonica, Lath.* is a finer but much scarcer bird, and resembles somewhat in color the willet, but has the marlin bill, which is longer than that of the last-named species.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill at base yellow, towards the end blackish-brown; upper parts spotted and barred with yellowish-grey and brownish-black; lower parts pale reddish-brown; tail darker, barred with black. Adult male with the bill at the base yellowish-brown, towards the end black; head and neck greyish-brown, tinged with pale reddish, streaked with dusky—darker on the upper part of the head and hind neck; throat whitish, lower parts pale reddish-brown; under tail-coverts barred with brown; tail reddish-brown, barred with dusky; upper tail-coverts the same; upper parts barred with brownish-black and pale reddish-brown, spotted with dusky; inner primaries tipped with yellowish-white; scapulars and wing-coverts barred with pale reddish-brown and greyish-white; shaft of the first primary white, dusky at the tip; inner shafts at the base white, rest part light brown, excepting the tips, which are dusky. Length, sixteen inches; wing,

nine and a half. Female larger, exceeding the male from three to four inches."—*Giraud.*

Ring-Tailed Marlin.

Hudsonian Godwit.

Limosa Hudsonica, Lath.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill blackish-brown, at base of lower mandible yellow; upper parts light brown, marked with dull brown, and a few small white spots; neck all around brownish-grey; lower parts white, largely marked with ferruginous; basal part of tail-feathers and a band crossing the rump, white. Adult with the bill slender, blackish towards the tip, lighter at the base, particularly at the base of the lower mandible; a line of brownish-white from the bill to the eye; lower eyelid white; throat white, spotted with rust color; head and neck brownish-grey; lower parts white, marked with large spots of ferruginous; under tail-coverts barred with brownish-black, and ferruginous; tail brownish-black, with a white band at the base; a band over the rump; tips of primary coverts and bases of quills white; upper tail-coverts brownish-black—their base white; upper parts greyish-brown, scapulars marked with darker; feet bluish. Length, fifteen inches and a half; wing, eight and a half. Young with the lower parts brownish-grey, the ferruginous markings wanting."—*Giraud.*

Snipe.

Genus Scolopax, Linn.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill long, at least twice the

length of the head; straight, tapering, and flattened towards the end; eyes rather large, placed high in the head, and far back from the bill; neck of moderate length, and rather thick; body full; wings rather long and pointed; tail moderate and rounded; legs moderate; toes slender and rather long, except the hind one; middle toe longest, and connected at the base with the inner by a slight web, the outer one being free.

Dowitcher.

Dowitch—Brown Back—Quail-Snipe—Red-Breasted Snipe.

Scolopax Noveboracensis, Wils.

This is a beautiful, excellent, and plentiful bird; it abounds in the marshes during the entire summer, congregates in vast flocks, and although uttering a faint call itself, is attracted to the decoys by the cry of the yellow-legs, or almost any sharp whistle. It is remarkably gentle, individuals often alighting when their associates are slain, in spite of the unusual uproar; and it can be more readily approached than any of the bay-birds. Its flesh, moreover, is quite delicate, and when fat somewhat similar to that of the English snipe, which it greatly resembles in appearance. In general color it is brownish, with a light abdomen, but occasionally the breast is as red as that of a robin in full plumage. Its flight is steady, although when alarmed it "skivers," or darts about rapidly, and as it flies in close ranks, it suffers proportionally. Although it is rather looked down

upon by persons who wish to make a show of large birds, I am always entirely satisfied with a good bag of well-conditioned dowitchers.

"*Specific Character.*—Spring plumage, upper parts brownish-black, variegated with light brownish-red; lower parts dull orange-red, abdomen paler, spotted and barred with black; rump white; the tail feathers and the upper and lower tail-coverts, alternately barred with white and black. In autumn the upper parts are brownish-grey; the lower parts greyish-white; the tail feathers and the upper and lower tail-coverts the same as in spring. Adult with the bill towards the end black, lighter at the base; top of the head, back of the neck, scapulars, tertials, and fore part of the back, blackish-brown, variegated with ferruginous; secondaries and wing-coverts clove-brown, the latter edged with white, the former tipped with the same; hind part of back white; the rump marked with roundish spots of blackish-brown; upper tail-coverts dull white, barred with black; tail feathers crossed with numerous black bands, their tips white; loral band dusky, the space between which and the medial band on the fore part of the head, greyish-white, tinged with ferruginous, and slightly touched with dusky; sides of the head spotted with dark-brown; lower parts dull orange-red, the abdomen lighter; the neck and fore part of breast spotted with dusky; the sides of the body with numerous bars of the same color; legs and feet dull yellowish-green. Young with the lower parts paler. Winter dress,

the upper parts brownish-grey; neck ash-grey, streaked with dusky; lower parts greyish-white, with dusky bars on the sides of the body. Length, ten inches and a half; wing, six."—*Giraud.*

Curlew.

Genus Numenius, Briss.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill very long, slender, decurved or arched, with the upper mandible the longer, and obtuse at the end; head rounded and compressed above; neck long, body full, wings long, feet rather long; toes connected at the base; *tibiâ* bare a short space above the knee; legs rather long; tail short and rounded.

Jack Curlew.

Short-billed Curlew. Hudsonian Curlew.

Numenius Hudsonicus, Lath.

This is a graceful and elegant bird, but so shy and so well able to carry off shot, that it is regarded as the most difficult to kill of all the bay-birds. It has a long, rolling cry, and although it approaches the decoys, it rarely alights, or even pauses over them; but, detecting the deception, it turns off or passes on in its course. For this reason, the fortunate sportsman who kills a "Jack" is eminently satisfied, although its flesh is not remarkably fine.

"*Specific Character.*—Length of bill, three inches and three-quarters; tarsi, two inches; lower parts

white. Adult with the upper part of the head deep brown, with a central and two lateral lines of whitish; a brown line from the bill to the eye, and another behind the eye; neck all round, pale yellowish-grey, longitudinally streaked with brown, excepting the upper part of the throat, which is greyish-white; upper parts in general blackish-brown, marked with numerous spots of brownish-white, there being several along the margins of each feather; wings and rump somewhat lighter; upper tail-coverts and tail barred with dark-brown and olivaceous grey; primaries and their coverts blackish-brown, all with transverse yellowish-grey markings on the inner web; the shaft of the first quill, white—of the rest, brown; breast and abdomen greyish-white, the sides tinged with cream color, and barred with greyish-brown; bill rather more than twice the length of the head, of a brownish-black color—at the base of the lower mandible, flesh colored. Length, eighteen inches; wing, nine and a half."—*Giraud.*

Sickle-bill Curlew.

Long-billed Curlew.

Numenius Longirostris, Wils.

The finest, largest, most graceful, and elegant of all the bay-birds is the magnificent sickle-bill; associating in large flocks, and with a spread of wings of little less than three feet, when it approaches the stand, the sportsman's heart palpitates with excite-

ment, and the sky seems to have lost its natural blue and become of a rich brown tint. As these splendid birds, shrieking their hoarse call, set their wings for the stool, and crossing one another in their flight, pause in doubt; or, after alighting individually, rise again, and hesitate whether to remain or continue their course—the sportsman, cowering in his lair, and anxious to take advantage of this glorious opportunity, becomes wildly eager with excitement; and if, after having by a judicious selection brought several to the ground, he recalls the departing flock which again presents itself to his aim, his rapture knows no bounds, and with his reloaded breech-loader, he repeats, perhaps more than once, the exhilarating performance.

This lordly bird, the largest of the bay-snipe, is often extremely gentle, and may be lured by the imitation of its cry at an immense distance, and brought back to the decoys several times, where one or more of its companions may have fallen; but at other times it is wild and shy. Individuals differ considerably in size, the largest I ever saw having a bill eleven inches long, and some weighing nearly double as much as others; but all are of a beautiful reddish-brown or burnt sienna tint, with a yellowish shade on the abdomen. Their flight is steady, and their flesh tough, dark, and oily. Their eye is extremely bright, and their shape graceful.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill towards the end decurved; upper part of the throat, and a band from the bill to the eye, light buff; general plumage,

pale reddish-brown; head and neck streaked with dusky; upper parts marked with blackish-brown; tail barred with the same; abdomen, plain reddish-brown; feet, bluish. Length, twenty-six inches; wing, eleven. The bill of the specimen from which this description is taken measures eight inches. The bills of individuals of this species vary, but the length is at all times sufficient to determine the species."—*Giraud.*

Fute.

Doe-bird.—Esquimaux Curlew.

Numenius Borealis, Lath.

This is an upland bird, quite rare, but large, and rather delicate eating.

"*Specific Character.*—Bill, along the gap, about two inches and a quarter; tarsi, one inch and five-eighths; upper parts, dusky brown, with pale yellowish-white, marked all over with pale reddish-brown. Adult with a line of white from the bill to the eye; eyelids, white; upper part of the head dusky, spotted in front with greyish-white, a medial band of the same color; throat, white; neck and breast yellowish-grey, with longitudinal marks of dusky on the former, pointed spots of the same color on the latter; abdomen, dull yellowish-white; flanks, barred with brown; lower tail coverts the same as the abdomen; tail and upper tail coverts barred with pale reddish-brown and dusky, tipped with yellowish-white; upper parts brownish, the feathers

tipped with pale reddish-brown, the scapulars margined and tipped with lighter; primaries, dark-brown, margined internally with lighter—the first shaft white, with the tip dusky—the rest brown. Length, fourteen inches and a half; wing, eight."—*Giraud.*

CHAPTER VI.

MONTAUK POINT.

The eastern end of Long Island, that extremity which seems to stretch out like the hand of welcome towards the nations of the old world, beckoning their inhabitants to our hospitable shores, is divided into two long points like the tines of a fork. The upper point shuts in Long Island Sound, and protects our inland commerce from the violence of the "Great Deep;" while the lower prong, which is kissed on the one side by the blue waters of the Peconic Bay, and on the other is buffeted by the billows of the great Atlantic, is known as Montauk Point. The heaving ocean seems here to have solidified itself into a sandy soil, which rises and swells and rolls, much after the manner of its mighty prototype, except that a scanty garment of tawny grass clothes the outlines of the billowy waste. "Cattle on a thousand hills" here roam in a state of, at least, semi-independence, which they occasionally assert by charging upon the intruding sportsman in a manner which may be intended as playful, but which looks somewhat serious. For a dozen miles or so only four houses break the monotony of the dreary expanse, and it is to one of these, distant

some nine miles from the extreme point, that I am about to carry the reader, for here alone can plover-shooting be enjoyed in its fullest perfection.

There are numerous kinds of plover that make their migratory passages along our coasts; but the one to which I refer, while to the epicure it ranks almost, if not absolutely, the first upon the list, and affords, by the swiftness of its flight and the eccentricity of its habits, a prize not unworthy of the highest efforts of the sportsman, has been the victim of many a misnomer, but is correctly known by the appellation American Golden Plover, *Charadrius pluvialis* (P.). The Plover-family is large and of high respectability; but, when "upon his native heath," no one of its clans is entitled to wear a loftier crest than that which we now have under discussion. His near relative, the Bartramian Sandpiper or Grey Plover, is perhaps more aristocratically delicate in his figure, and is welcomed as heartily at the table of the epicure. But he is less social in his habits, and rarely affords any but single shots. He does not fraternize with wooden counterfeits, and his mellow whistle, as he rises at an impracticable distance, rarely responds to even the most seductive efforts of his pursuer. But our Golden friend, notwithstanding his auriferous title, his superior beauty of plumage, his swiftness and strength, and the savory reputation which he enjoys among the knowing-ones, is possessed of gregarious habits, of a singularly frank and unsuspicious nature, and is generally ready to stop and have a chat with any-

thing which bears the faintest resemblance to a bird and a brother. It is well for his admirers that such is his nature; and although the wide appreciation of his merits certainly causes great destruction among his ranks, still the vast flocks which, sometimes for days together, fly past, within sight of the stands, unshot at, seem to warrant the hope that the hour of the final extinction of his race is very far distant.

Taking the Long Island railroad to Greenport in the early part of September, and having encountered and overcome the ordinary delay and difficulty of obtaining a sailboat to further prosecute our voyage, we find ourselves at last gliding on the waves of the beautiful bay, past Shelter and Gardiner's islands, and approaching the long low line of the Nepeague beach. With a favorable breeze we may expect to be landed on the smooth sand in a little cove, about one mile from our destination, in two hours from our time of departure; but if the wind is adverse and the fates unpropitious, we may have to follow the path to Lester's in the dark, which will require our best instincts, aided by the guidance of the distant booming of the surf, and the assistance of our especial guardian angel.

Once there, however, and we will be repaid for our sufferings; we may find a table covered with "South-side" delicacies, and bearing in the centre a huge dish of beautiful, odorous, melting plover, cooked to a turn, and we will undoubtedly meet kindred spirits and generous sportsmen who are on the same errand as ourselves. As we dispose of the

former, the latter will pour into our sympathetic ears wonderful accounts of their sport, and rival one another in recounting the long shots and the good shots they have made, the numbers of birds they have killed, and the pounds of bass they have caught.

Under the influences of a delicious supper and moderate "nightcap," we seek our couch with fond visions of the great flocks, and hopeful dreams that we will do as well on the morrow. At earliest dawn we spring from our bed, and rushing to the primitive little casement have only time to rejoice in the promise of a fine day, ere we note the welcome cry of our noble prey hurrying westward over the beach.

To don our shooting costume, to grasp our gun and ammunition, to load ourselves with the basket containing decoys and incidentals, and to emerge into the cool air of the September morning, require but a few minutes; we hasten across the sandy hillocks to our appointed spot, marked by a hollow scooped out for the concealment of former visitants, and by the quantity of feathers and cigar-stumps lying loosely around; and with hands trembling with impatience, we distribute the stools in what seems to us to be the most artistic and seductive manner,—for the birds are now beginning to fly just within a tantalizing yet impracticable range, and we long for action.

How wild, how glorious is the hour and the scene! The heavy boom of the ocean, which rolls almost at our feet, is relieved by the soft, mellow notes of the sea-birds which float through the air in varied yet

harmonious cadence, and by the low of distant cattle, just shaking off their slothful dreams. Hardly have we disposed our body to the requisite flatness, when a chattering chorus of melody makes our heart leap with eagerness, and our eyes strain with impatience to discern its source. Aha, we have them now! that small, erratic cloud to the eastward, bearing directly before the wind towards our covert, sends a thrill through our being, which the whole "spacious firmament on high," even on the loveliest of nights, has, we honestly confess it, never succeeded in imparting. On they come, nearer, nearer, nearer. We pucker up our lips to greet their approach, but the saucy gale renders our rude efforts futile, and we commit our trust to Providence and our painted counterfeits. Now they are within easy range, but somewhat scattered; with a violent effort at self-command, worthy of a higher cause, we remain motionless, for there are evident indications of a social spirit in that joyous group. They pause, they swerve, they wheel upon their tracks, and with motionless wings and a sweet low-murmured greeting, they approach the fatal stools. How rash the confidence! How foul the treachery! But, we must also confess, how intense the excitement, as we pull the right trigger at the critical moment, and then, as the deluded victims scatter wildly, with an outburst of appeal against man's cruelty, give them the left barrel, and add three more to the list of feathered martyrs. With lightning speed, their thinned ranks vanish beyond the neighboring sand-

hills, and reloading our gun, we hasten to gather up the slain.

Six with the right and three with the left barrel, are pretty well for a beginning; but we had better have remained at our post, for while we are chasing up one of the wounded birds, two more flocks pass within easy range of our hiding-place. Hurriedly twisting the neck of the fugitive, we resume our lonely watch, and before the breakfast-hour of eight, which our unwontedly early exertions have made a somewhat serious epoch, we have had two more double shots, and increased our score to twenty-one. Beautiful, "beautiful exceedingly" is the burden of game which we proudly carry back to our inn, leaving our stools as they stand.

A hearty breakfast makes us feel like *a new man*, and, after a fair discussion of its merits, lighting our pipe, we again wend our way to the scene of our triumph. The cry is still they come; flock after flock presents its compliments, and leaves mementoes of its presence; but towards noon the hot sun disposes the birds to listless inactivity, the flight diminishes, and finally stops. Returning to the house with a bag larger by only three birds than that of the morning, we kill the hours before dinner by a few casts into the breakers, and land a ten-pound bass.

With sharpened appetite, we welcome the savory dinner, and are quite contented to rest and let our prey rest till five o'clock, when fifteen more birds reward our post-prandial exertions, and make up a

total for the day of sixty plover and one bass. We sink to sleep that night with the proud consciousness that our first day's plover-shooting has been a great success; our heart prays silently for a continuance of our good fortune, and we indulge in sweet thoughts of home, and the pleasure our return laden with spoils will cause, when our friends greet us and them at the social board.

The next day is as delightful; the sweet, thrilling music again fills the air at short intervals; again our trusty breech-loader sends its charge into the thickest of the "brown," or cuts down the straggler looking for "former companions all vanished and gone." Again we call the swift-travelling flock from the very zenith, or whistle our lips into a blister, endeavoring to attract the wary knowing ones that pause to look, only to flee the faster; and the night finds us with a still larger bag, but without a bass. So eager have we become, so fearful that we should lose a shot, and judging by the accumulating clouds in the east that on the morrow it may storm, that we stay out all day, except the necessary moments for our meals, and give no thought to the monsters of the deep.

Nor were we mistaken; the morrow comes, the gathering storm has broken, and no creature of mortal mould can face its fury—at least no bird, with any pretensions to common sense or respectability, would imperil his plumes by an unnecessary exposure to such an ordeal. So with forced patience, we get through the live-long day as best we can;

and on the following day, hail a sky as cloudless as the most ardent sportsman could desire. But alas! the flight has gone by, scared away perhaps by the storm, or retreating before the advancing fall; and when we take our seat at the breakfast-table, we are obliged to admit that only nine birds have fallen to our gun.

But the irrepressible and inextinguishable Lester rises triumphant in this emergency. He boldly suggests that there *must be* some sluggards, who have tarried, spell-bound by the attractions of such a terrestrial, or, rather ornithological, paradise; and accordingly, he *hitches up* a venerable specimen of the genus "*Equus*," and we start for an excursion "over the hills and far away." Before we have advanced a couple of miles we have bagged a half dozen solitary specimens of Bartram's Sandpiper or Grey Plover, so dear to the sportsman and the gourmand, but have seen no trace of the object of our pursuit. When, suddenly, as we surmount one of the swelling eminences which are the prevailing feature of this district of country, we come upon a sight such as, perhaps, but few sportsmen have ever beheld. A gentle hollow spreads before us, for several acres, literally covered with the ranks of the much-desired, the matchless Golden Plover.

As they stand in serried legions, the white mark on their heads gives a strange chequered weirdness to the phalanx: and we involuntarily pause, spell-bound by the novelty of the spectacle. Lester himself, though an old hand, owns that he has never

before gazed on such a sight. There they stand with heads erect, and bodies motionless, just out of gunshot. Their number is computed by our companion to be not less than three thousand, closely packed, and apparently awaiting our onset. What is to be done? Delay may be fatal, but precipitancy would be equally so: and our pulses stop beating under the stress of the emergency. Our horse also stops, obedient to an involuntary pull of the reins. We accept the omen, and cautiously descend from our vehicle; warily crawling to within seventy yards, we halt as we see unmistakable evidences of uneasiness and suspicion among the crowded ranks. They stoop, they run, they rise with "a sounding roar," to which the united report of our four barrels savagely responds. Away, away with headlong speed, scatters and dissolves that multitudinous host, and we hasten to secure our spoils.

But, seventy yards make a long range for plover-shooting, and we are somewhat chagrined to find that only six dead and seven wounded birds remain as proofs of the accuracy of our aim, and the efficiency of our weapons. Hurriedly we plant our stools, hoping for the return of at least a considerable portion of the vanished forces; but they have apparently had enough of our society, and, after two hours spent in ambush, with only an occasional shot at single stragglers or small flocks, we wend our way back to the house.

On the morrow we kill a dozen birds over the

stools, before breakfast, among which are two specimens of the beautiful Esquimaux Curlew or Fute, as he is commonly called, and which seems to be on terms of the closest intimacy with our Golden friend. We find him to be a heavier bird, equally inclined to obesity, and, as future experiments satisfy us, nearly as perfect in delicate richness of flavor.

At nine o'clock Dobbin is again harnessed, and we start for the scene of yesterday's exploit. But the sighing wind now sweeps over only a deserted moor, and we direct our course towards Stratton's, to make an inspection of Great Pond. Here, by good luck and management, we bag five teal and a black duck, as well as three passing plover. A few large flocks of the latter are seen, but they are wary and unapproachable; and after several fruitless efforts, we abandon their pursuit and start for dinner.

Having rendered full justice to the merits of a bountiful repast, which, if it is made prominent in this account, was still more prominent in our hungry thoughts, we stroll to the ocean-side and make a dozen casts for bass, but our luck seems to be on the turn and we decide to leave on the morrow for Greenport. About an hour before sunset, a few birds are on the wing, and we again seek the field of our first success. Here we make our final effort, and are rewarded with five noble victims, killed singly at long shots, and we restore our breech-loader to its case. We have no reason to be dissatisfied with our four-days' sport, and it is with a certain reluctance, and a sincere resolve to renew our visit at an

early date, that we pack our valise in anticipation of a start on the morrow.

Our team is at the door; we bid adieu to some ladies of the household (of whom while writing these lines we have thought much, though we have, until now, said nothing), and, mounting by Lester's side, we trot merrily over the hills, till we reach the deep sandy desert of the Nepeague beach. "A long pull, and a strong pull" for an hour, brings us to "terra firma" again, and rattling through the quaint old town of Easthampton, after a charming drive, we reach Sag Harbor, where a most absurdly diminutive steamer, of just *seven-horse* power, awaits to convey us to Greenport. We part from our host with sincere gratitude for the genial kindness which he has shown to us during our visit, and step on the narrow deck of the tiny craft. A voyage of thirteen miles, made under a full head of steam in just two hours and a quarter, brings us once more to the beautiful village of Greenport, where the cars are awaiting us.

We return with a bag full of game, and the following general conclusions and precepts impressed upon our mind: In plover shooting use No. 6 shot in the left barrel, for the birds are of wonderful strength and require to be hit hard, or they will fly an immense distance even if "sick unto death," and if crippled, will sneak, and hide, and run, and cause much loss of time that is precious indeed. Do not fire too soon; as the flock will generally "double" if allowed sufficient time, and then is the chance to "rake 'em

down." Be patient, keep cool, aim ahead of the birds, and keep wide awake.

On almost any day, from the 25th of August to the 10th of September, there are sport and pleasure to be had among the wild sand-hills of Montauk; and if there has been a north-easterly storm, with pitchforks full of rain and caps full of wind, there will be such an abundance of birds as only experience can conceive of or appreciate. That is an event that most of us have yet to wait for. Reader, I wish I were sufficiently unselfish to say honestly—may you enjoy it first.

CHAPTER VII.

RAIL SHOOTING.

Success in this delightful sport depends as much upon the proper accessories, together with experience in minor matters, as in the great art of properly handling the gun. The best shot, badly equipped, will be surpassed by an inferior marksman accustomed to the business, and thoroughly fitted out for it. The shooting is done among high reeds, and from small, light, and unstable skiffs, which are poled over muddy shallows with an unsteady motion that puts an end to skill which is not founded on long practice. The sport lasts only during the few hours of high water, when the entire day's bag must be made, and requires, after the bird has been killed, a sharp eye to retrieve him amid the weeds and floating grass.

The number bagged, however, is sometimes prodigious; and although we rarely now hear of hundreds killed "in a tide," as was formerly not unusual, the shots are still frequently rapid, and the result satisfactory. The bird rises heavily, its long legs hanging down behind; flying slowly, it presents an easy mark to any one upon *terra firma*, and if not shot at, will alight after proceeding thirty or forty yards.

It comes on from the north during the early part

of September, and disappears so instantaneously with the first heavy frost, that our superstitious baymen imagine it retires into the mud. It can, however, fly strongly, as I have occasionally had unpleasant evidence under peculiar circumstances, and in wild, windy weather. During low water, when it can run upon the muddy bottom among the thick stalks, which it does rapidly, it can hardly be flushed by any but the strongest and toughest dog, and is not frequently pursued; although many persons enjoy the hard walking and exposure of this plan, preferring to tramp over the quaking surface of our broad salt meadows, and flushing the rail from amid some tuft of reeds, kill him with the aid of their loved fellow-playmate, a high-strung setter or untiring water spaniel.

As the tide rises, however, and covers the bottom with a few inches of water, the rail, caught feeding among its favorite wild oats, or on the grains of the high reeds, and alarmed at the advancing boat, is forced to take wing and present an easy mark to its destroyer. But if missed, although marked down to an inch, it rarely rises a second time, having probably escaped by swimming—a thorough knowledge of which is among its numerous accomplishments. The rail has a long, thin, and soft body, which it appears to have the faculty of compressing; as it can glide amid the thick stems of reeds and grass with wonderful rapidity; and if wounded, it will dive and swim under water, leaving its bill only projecting, so as to bid defiance to pursuit.

The first necessity of equipment for this sport is a breech-loading gun, which not only enables the sportsman to kill double the number of birds, but will occasionally give him the benefit, by a rapid change in the charge, of a favorable presentation of a chance flock of ducks. But as many persons, out of a want of knowledge or of funds, still cling to the old muzzle-loader, it may be well briefly to mention the articles that tend to modify its inferiority.

Of course, as the shooting occupies but a few hours, and in good days the birds are perpetually on the wing, it is essential to load rapidly; and to do this the sportsman places on a thwart before him a tin box divided into compartments for powder, shot, caps, and wads, or, as I prefer, two boxes, one filled with powder and the other with the other materials. For many reasons there should be a lid over the powder—to prevent its being ignited by a chance spark or blown away by a strong wind—and the ordinary flask is frequently used in spite of the consequent delay. A double scoop, made of tin or brass, and regulated to the precise load, is placed among the powder and the shot, and a solid loading-stick lies near at hand.

By these means the rapidity of loading is more than doubled; the powder is dropped into both barrels at once by means of the double scoop, wads are driven home by a single blow of the rod, both barrels are charged with shot at once in the same manner, the caps are within easy reach, and the gun is loaded in less than half the time consumed in the

ordinary process. The shot may be made into cartridges of paper with a wad at the upper end, and thus a few additional of the precious seconds saved. Both barrels are discharged before either is reloaded, and the birds are retrieved immediately.

The sportsman stands erect, without any support to modify the unsteadiness consequent upon the irregular motion of the boat, and requires practice, not merely to enable him to take aim, but even to retain his footing. Where the water is low and the reeds strong, this difficulty is augmented, as the boat entirely loses its way after every push, and advances by jerks that utterly confound a novice. Experience, however, being acquired in loading rapidly and in retaining his balance, the sportsman's labors are easy; but the punter requires many different qualities, and upon his excellence mainly depends the final result.

He must possess judgment to select the best ground, strength to urge on the boat unflaggingly, and an inordinate development of the bump of locality to mark the dead birds. The bird once killed and the sportsman part ended, then the punter displays his ability; and if thoroughly versed in his craft will push the boat through tall reeds, and matted weeds, and fallen oat-stalks, and drifted grass, with wonderful accuracy to the very spot, and peering down amid the roots, will distinguish the brown feathers almost covered with water and hidden by the vegetable growth.

In order to retrieve quickly, a wide-meshed scap-

net is a great convenience; but to mark well, a man must be endowed by nature with that peculiar gift. Among the vast mass of undistinguishable marine plants that spring from the muddy bottom and rise a few inches or many feet above the surface, it would seem impossible to determine, within an approach to accuracy, where some bird, visible only for a moment and cut down when just topping the reeds, has fallen; and when another bird rises to meet the same fate, and perhaps a dozen are down before the first is retrieved, successful marking becomes a miracle. With some punters on the Delaware, where their names are famous, so wonderful is the precision that every bird, if killed outright, will be recovered, and even a poor marksman will make a respectable return; but when the gentleman shoots badly and the man marks worse, rail-shooting is unprofitable.

For this sport, thus followed, it will be seen that a punter is indispensable, and it is made the business of a large class of men along the salt marshes where the rail most do congregate; and wherever a punter cannot be obtained, as in the wilder portions of our country, rail-shooting cannot be had.

From the necessity for rapid firing, the immense advantage of a breech-loader must be apparent; the tide rarely serves for over two or three hours, and to kill more than a hundred birds in that time with a muzzle-loader is a remarkable feat, as it requires almost the entire time for the mere loading and firing of the gun; but the breech-loader may be charged in an instant, and enables the sportsman to improve

the lucky chance of coming upon a goodly collection of birds, and make the most of the scanty time permitted to him.

None of those vexatious mistakes that occasionally happen to the best sportsmen can befall him; the shot cannot get into the wrong barrel, nor the cap be forgotten; the powder is not exposed to ashes from a careless man's cigar; and there being no hurry, there is more probability of steady nerves and a true aim.

The charge should be light—three-quarters of an ounce of shot and two drachms of powder being abundant to kill the soft and gentle rail—and pellets at least as fine as No. 9 are preferable to coarser sizes. Old cartridges, that have been split and mended by gumming a piece of paper over the crack, may be used in the breech-loader, provided the sportsman desires to indulge in praiseworthy economy, or is deficient in a supply.

The sport is extremely exciting: the boat is forced along with considerable rustling and breaking of stems and stalks; the bright sun streams down upon the yellow reeds and lights up the variegated foliage of the distant shore; the waves of the bay or river, rising apparently to a level with the eye, sparkle in the gentle breeze that bends the sedge grass in successive waves; neighboring boats come and go, approach and recede; the rapid reports are heard in all directions, like fireworks on the Fourth of July; the sportsman stands erect, and eager with delirious excitement, near the bow; the punter

balances himself, and wields his long pole dexterously on a small platform at the stern.

Silently a bird, rising close to the boat, wings its way, with pendent legs and feeble strokes, towards some one of its numerous hiding-places; instantly the punter plants his pole firmly in the bottom, holding the skiff stationary, the sportsman brings up his piece, and, with deliberate aim, sends the charge straight after the doomed rail, which pitches headlong out of sight. The punter has marked him by that single wild rice-stalk with the broken top, and heads the boat at once towards the place; but ere he has advanced a dozen feet, another bird starts and offers to the expectant sportsman, who has his gun still "at a ready," another favorable chance, and, meeting the same fate, falls into that low bunch of matted wild oats. The breech-loader opens, the charges are extracted and others inserted, just in time to make sure of two rail that rise simultaneously, still ere the first has been reached, and which are both tumbled over and marked down—one, however, wing-tipped, and never to be seen by mortal eye again.

Thus have I experienced it on the Delaware, at Hackensack, and, in former days, among the tributaries of Jamaica Bay, and at many other places where more or less success has attended me. Although never having enjoyed great luck, never having advanced beyond the first hundred, and claiming to be no such marksman as several of my friends, I have had wondrous sport. Of a good day, when the

tide is favorable and the game plenty, the excitement is continuous, and increased by a sense of competition.

Other sportsmen are on the same ground, stopping probably at the same hotel and shooting in close proximity—occasionally too close, if they are thoughtless or careless. Not only will a charge of mustard seed sometimes rattle against the boat, but is apt, now and then, to pierce the clothes and penetrate the skin, followed by an irritation of mind and body; but when the tide has fallen, and the sport is over, a comparison of the bag made by each sportsman is inevitable, and no general assertions of round numbers will answer, but the birds must be produced. It is vain to claim what cannot be exhibited, and more than useless to talk of the immense quantities that were killed but not retrieved; such excuses are answered by ridicule, and if the poor shot would avoid being a butt, he must be modest and submissive.

There is danger too, at times, although an upset in the weeds can result in nothing worse than a wetting of oneself and one's ammunition, and the ruin of the day's enjoyment; but I was once on the Delaware, opposite Chester, when a fierce north-wester was blowing, which had driven much of the water out of the bay and river. The tide, of course, was poor, having difficulty to rise at all against the gale, which kept on increasing every moment, and the birds were scarce and difficult to flush. The work of poling was laborious; the boats stopped after every

push, and the heavy swell from the broad river, rolling in a long distance among the reeds, added a new motion to their natural unsteadiness.

Of course the sport was not encouraging, and the accidents were numerous; several sportsmen fell overboard, one upset his boat, and my man came so near it—his pole slipping at the moment he was exerting his utmost strength upon it—that his efforts to recover his balance reminded me of dancing the hornpipe in a state of frenzy. He kicked up more capers, and indulged in more contortions on the little platform, scarcely a foot square, which he occupied, than I supposed possible without dislocation of a limb; but he managed, however, to regain his equilibrium, and neither fell overboard nor upset the skiff.

These little incidents, and the shooting, such as it was, kept the party, which was numerous, interested until the time came for recrossing the river to our hotel. There was no stopping-place on our present side of the river, which presented one apparently endless view of waving reeds; and the alternative was simply to cross the open river, or pass the night in our boats. The swell had increased into high waves capped with snowy foam, and threatened destruction to our low-sided, short, and narrow boats. Many were the consultations between the various punters, and grave were the doubts expressed of a safe crossing; but as there was no help for it, the trial had to be made.

Selections were chosen of favorable starting-points, and most of the party put out at about the same

time—the sportsman lying on the bottom at full length in the stern, and the oarsman timing his strokes to the violence of the sea. The waves broke over us continually; it was necessary to bail every few minutes, and several had to put back when they met with some more than usually heavy wave, and take a fresh start, after emptying the superfluous water. Of course we were drenched to the skin, but found a species of consolation in knowing that no one had the advantage of another. Had any of our boats upset, although we might have clung to them and drifted back among the reeds, we could have effected a landing nowhere, and would probably have terminated our career then and there; had this happened to a certain little skiff that held two men and very few rail, this account would probably never have been written. However, fate ordained otherwise, and we reached our destination in safety.

The best locality for rail-shooting is along the marshy shores of the Delaware River, above and below Philadelphia; many birds are also killed on the Hackensack and the Connecticut; they are abundant on the James River, and doubtless further south, but are not shot there; and they are found scattered over the fresh as well as the salt marshes throughout the entire country. I have killed them in the corn-fields of Illinois while in pursuit of the prairie chicken, and have bagged several and heard many among the wild rice of the drowned shores of Lake Erie. They are a migratory bird, and pass to the southward in the early fall rather in advance of

the English snipe, and alight at any damp spots for a temporary rest wherever the growth of plants promises nutriment.

They are often flushed by the snipe-shooter, together with the larger fresh-water rail, *rallus elegans*, and their curious cry resounds along the reedy marshes where the wild-fowler pursues the early ducks. Nevertheless, they are difficult to flush and kill where there is no tide to drive them from their muddy retreats, and where the ground is too heavy for a dog; and, comparatively speaking, on fresh water, unless the wind shall have caused a temporary rise, they are safe from injury.

Their voices reply with the guttural "krek-krek-krek" to the noise of the boat, and tauntingly boast of their abundance and their security. Moreover, in a new country, where larger game is still plentiful, the excellences of the tender but diminutive rail are lost sight of by comparison with his more profitable compeers; and except along the Atlantic coast, he is known as a game-bird neither to the sportsman nor the cook.

From the fact that he is rarely seen in the spring, and does not at that season give his enemies a chance to prevent his reaching his nesting-places at the far north—but only visits us during a few short weeks in the fall, and then is not much exposed, except in certain localities—his race will be preserved in undiminished numbers for many generations; the light skiffs will carry the eager city sportsman along the shores of the Delaware, the Hackensack, and the cove on

the Connecticut, and the rapid reports will continue to reverberate over the reedy marshes.

There are two varieties, the short-billed or sora-rail, *rallus Carolinus;* and the long-billed, or Virginia rail, *rallus Virginianus*, which are easily distinguished by this peculiarity, and differ, also, slightly in plumage. The sora-rail are by far the most numerous, especially along the sea-coast, and are usually referred to as "the rail," but both are shot and eaten indiscriminately. Their habits, mode of flight, and gastronomic qualities, appear to be identical, but I think the Virginia rail are proportionally more numerous at the West, having a slight preference, perhaps, for the fresh water. Their food must be, however, essentially different; for while the sora, on account of its short bill, must be confined to the seeds of its favorite reed, zimosa, or the grains of the wild oats, the Virginia rail, with its longer bill, also draws much of its nourishment from snails and aquatic insects, and is considered by some less delicate in flavor than the former variety.

About the fifth of September, before the English snipe are numerous, although their taunting "scaip" may be occasionally heard on their broad, open feeding-grounds; ere the ducks have marshalled their legions in retreat from the chilly blasts of the north, after the bay-birds, with the exception of the "short-neck," shall have mainly passed to the southward, and before the quail are large enough to kill—the sportsman arms himself with his breech-loader, and driving to Hackensack or taking steamboat from

Philadelphia, embarks in the slight skiff usually called a "rail-boat," and practises his hand—possibly out of exercise since the woodcock days of early July—upon the tame and languid rail.

His cartridges are prepared for the occasion; as he does not intend to devote more than a day or two to the amusement, he takes with him a light suit, appropriate to the boat and the weather, gaiter shoes, flannel pants and shirt, and his waterproof, to meet a temporary shower, and he lays in sufficient liquid for himself and his man, knowing that salt air produces thirst and country inns bad liquor. Thus armed and equipped, if he is fortunate enough to have high tides, he is almost sure to enjoy fine sport, and bring home a bag of game that will furnish forth his table right handsomely to a goodly company, or go far and spread much satisfaction among his friends who may be the fortunate recipients. The heats of the summer solstice are over, the birds will keep several days with care, and the sportsman has not to dread either the burning sun of August or the freezing blasts of winter.

Many double shots present themselves in rail-shooting; and upon the manner in which these are turned to account, and the brilliancy with which a bird that rises while the sportsman is in the act of loading, is covered with the hastily charged barrel and cut down, depends the superiority of one marksman over another. In the days of the muzzle-loader, I have killed many a bird with one barrel while the ramrod was still in the other, and have shot several

with the barrels resting on my arm, when they had slipped from my hand in bringing the gun up hurriedly to my shoulder. Every single rise should be secured as matter-of-course, and most of the double ones, care being taken in the latter to obey that great rule, of always killing the more difficult shot first; if you shoot right-handed, as the majority of persons do, and one bird flies to the right and the other to the left, shoot first at the former, and you will have less difficulty in bringing back the gun towards the latter

Never relax your vigilance, as the birds rise silently, without the warning whistle of the woodcock or whirr of the quail, at the least expected moment; and if the punter attempts to direct your attention, the chances are ten to one that you look in the wrong quarter.

The rail, while being a pleasant bird to shoot, is also a pleasant bird to eat. There is no variety of our wild game, large or small, that is more delicious; its flavor is excellent, and its tenderness beyond comparison; it may not have the rich full flavor of that noblest of them all, the big-eyed woodcock, nor the savory raciness of the full-breasted quail, nor the strong game taste of the stylish ruffed grouse, nor the unequalled richness of the kingly canvas-back—but in tender, melting delicacy it is hardly surpassed. If cooked in perfection, it drops to pieces in the mouth, leaving only a delightful residuum of enjoyment. It should be floated in rosy wine, and washed down with the ruby claret, and accompanied by

fried potatoes, thin and crisp as a new bank note. It may be preceded by the *pièce de resistance*, and should be followed only by salad, which may in fact be eaten with it, if dressed with sufficient purity.

Kill your rail handsomely in the field, missing not more than one in twenty, present him properly and with due appreciation on the table, and eat him with the gratitude that he deserves.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD-FOWL SHOOTING.

It is not proposed to give any extended account of wild-fowl shooting as practised on the waters of Long Island, or in the neighborhood of the great Northern cities; the unsportsmanlike modes of proceeding which are there in vogue, and which, while contravening all true ideas of sport, insult common sense by the ruthless injury they inflict, have been fully set forth by other writers.

In stationing a battery—that imitation coffin, which should be a veritable one, if justice had its way, to every man who enters it—and in lying prone in it through the cold days of winter, the market-man may find his pecuniary profit, but the gentleman can receive no pleasure; while the permanent injury inflicted by driving away the ducks from their feeding-grounds, and making them timorous of stopping at all in waters from any and all portions of which unseen foes may arise, is ten times as great as the temporary advantage gained; and as for calling that sport, which is merely the wearisome endurance of cold and tedium to obtain game that might be killed more handsomely, and in the long run more abundantly, by other methods, is an entire misapplication of the word.

So long as the shooter confines himself to points of land or sedge, whether he uses decoys or awaits the accidental passage of the birds, he not only permits himself a change of position and sufficient motion to keep his blood in circulation, but he allows the frightened flocks that have already lost several of their number in running the gauntlet, a secure retreat in the open waters, and undisturbed rest at meal time. And so long as this is granted them they will tarry, and trust to their sharp eyes and quick ears to save their lives; but when they cannot feed in peace, and when they can find no haven of safety in the broad expanse of water, they will inevitably continue their migration, and seek more hospitable quarters.

Wild-fowl shooting, as pursued at the West, or even at the South, is glorious and exhilarating; there the sportsman has exercise, or the assistance of his faithful and intelligent retriever, and is required to bring into play the higher powers of his nature. He manages his own boat, or he stands securely upon the firm ground, and if he has not a canine companion, chases his crippled birds and retrieves the dead ones by his own unaided efforts.

At the West, although the vast numbers do not collect that congregate in the Chesapeake Bay and Currituck Inlet, there is an independence in the mode of pursuit that has a peculiar charm; and from the facilities afforded by the nature of the ground, the excellent cover furnished by the high reeds, and the immense number of single shots, the average

success is as great as in the more open waters of the Southern coast.

The employment of retrievers is not general in our country, which is, by the character of its marshes and growth of plants, better suited for the full display of their capacities than any other. There are certain objections to the use of a dog in wild-fowl shooting, which, although entirely overbalanced in the writer's opinion by the corresponding advantages, are unquestionably serious. The season for duck-shooting is mainly late and cold, when it is essential to the shooter's comfort that his boat should be dry; but the dog, with every retrieved bird, comes back dripping with wet, and if he does not let it drain into the bottom of the skiff, where it "swashes" about over clothes and boots, shakes himself in a way to deluge with a mimic cataract every person and thing within yards of him.

It is unreasonable to ask of the intelligent and devoted but shivering creature, that he should remain standing in the freezing water or upon the damp sedge; and if the master is as little of a brute as his companion, and has a spare coat, the dog will have it for a bed, regardless of the consequences.

Nor is this the only difficulty; for unless the animal has instinctive judgment as well as careful training, he may in open water upset the frail skiff, by either jumping out of it, or clambering into it injudiciously. A thoughtful creature may be taught to make his entry and exit over the stern, but un-

fortunately, some of the most enthusiastic and serviceable dogs have little discretion or forethought; and unless he is trained to perfect quiet, and broken to entire immobility at the most exciting moments, he is apt to interfere sadly with the sport.

In spite of these inconveniences, however, the loss of many of his birds—amounting, amid the dense reeds of the western lakes, to nearly one-half of the whole number—will satisfy the sportsman that the retriever, with his devoted and wonderful sagacity, to say nothing of his delightful companionship, is a most desirable acquisition. Where the sportsman is forced to pursue his calling solitary and alone, so far as human associates are concerned, he will find the presence of his four-footed friend a great satisfaction, and, amid the solitary and unemployed mid-day hours, a pleasant resource.

The dog is the natural companion of the sportsman—the partaker of his pleasures, the coadjutor of his triumphs; and whenever his peculiar gifts can be used to advantage, it is a gratification to both to call upon him. The knowledge that he will acquire in time is truly marvellous. Not only does he possess the power of smell, but his eyesight and hearing far surpass those of man; he will often discern a flock long before it is visible to human eyes, and his motions will warn his master of its approach.

His training can be carried on beyond limit; his knowledge increases daily, and his devotion is unbounded. Of all the race, the retriever is probably the most intelligent; as, in fact, intelligence is one

of his necessary qualifications. For this work no breed has the slightest value unless the individuals possess rare sagacity and almost human judgment. Some of the most valuable English dogs have been from an accidental cross; and a pure cur with a heavy coat is often as good as any other.

There is in England a strain of dogs known as retrievers; they are mostly used in connexion with upland shooting, as English pointers and setters are not broken to fetch; but the favorite animals for wild-fowl shooting, which have made their name notorious in connexion with this specialty, have generally come from parents neither of which possesses the true retriever blood.

In this country the best breed will have some of the Newfoundland strain; the animal must be clothed with a dense coat of thick hair to endure the severe exposure to which he is subjected, and must be endowed with a natural aptitude and passion for swimming. The usual color is dark, which, in the writer's judgment, is a great mistake; and the only really distinct breed of retrievers is known as that of Baltimore.

In the Southern States the dog, as an assistant in wild-fowl shooting, has always been in far greater repute than at the North; although the inland lakes of the latter, the extensive marshes closely grown up with tall *zimosas*, matted wild oats, and thick weeds, make his services far more desirable. At the South alone has any intelligent attention been given to raising a superior strain of retrievers; and

whether we seek an animal that by his curious motions will toll ducks up to the stand, or by his natural intelligence will aid the punt-shooter in recovering his game, it is at the South alone that we can find any admitted pedigree.

In the Northern States, however, the "native," as he is called at the West—probably from the fact that he is invariably a foreigner—selects any promising pup, and by means of much flogging and steady work trains him to a faint knowledge of his duties. A young dog loves to fetch, and will take pleasure in chasing a ball thrown for him round the room, and if he is a water-dog, naturally brings from the water a stick cast into it, so that the routine part is easily impressed upon him; but an animal with this proficiency alone is scarcely worth keeping.

A good dog must have intuitive quickness of thought and judgment; he must know enough to lie perfectly motionless when a flock is approaching; he must understand how to retrieve his birds judiciously, bringing the cripples first; he must have perseverance, endurance, and great personal vigor. A duck is cunning, and to outwit its many artifices and evasions the retriever must have greater shrewdness; it can skulk, and hide, and swim, and sneak, and he must have the patience to follow it, and the strength to capture it. Wonderful stories are told of the many exhibitions of what seems much like human reason, evinced by some of the celebrated retrievers.

But probably the rarest quality for a dog or man to possess, and the most necessary to both, if they

would excel in field sports, is the power of self-restraint. To ask an animal, trembling all over with delirious excitement, to lie down and remain perfectly motionless during those most trying moments when the ducks are approaching and being killed, is to demand of him a self-control greater than would be often found in his master. Yet upon this quality in the dog depends the entire question of his value or worthlessness; if he makes the slightest motion, the quick eyes of the birds are sure to discern it; and if he bounces up at the first discharge, he will certainly destroy his master's chance of using his second barrel, and perhaps upset him over the side of the boat.

It is to avoid the sharp eyes of the ducks that a black color for the dog has been condemned. Amid the yellow and brown reeds of the marshes, or upon the reflective surface of the open water, black, from its capacity for absorbing the rays of light, is visible at an immense distance. Yellow, brown, or grey are the best shades; and any color is preferable to black. Red is selected by the Southerners for their tolling dogs, but this is with the purpose of making them attractive.

Many persons conceive that a dark coat is warmer for an animal than white, an idea that is carried into practice in the ordinary winter dress of human beings; but it is refuted not only by the simplest principles of science, but by the natural covering of the animals that inhabit the cold climes of the north. The polar bear is clothed in white, while the southern bear

is of a deep black; and many of the animals and some birds that pass the winter in the arctic regions, change their dress in winter from dark to grey or pure white.

Undoubtedly with a retriever the first point is to consider his protection against cold; plunging as he does at short intervals into water at a low temperature, and exposed when emerging to the still colder blasts of Æolus, he must be rendered comfortable as far as possible at the sacrifice of every other consideration. This is attained by the thickness more than the color of his coat; and the writer has always fancied, whether correctly or not, that curly hair is warmer than straight hair.

The matted coat of the Newfoundland dogs—the smaller breed being preferable by reason of size—is extremely warm, and where its color is modified by judicious crossing, is all that can be desired; while the instinctive intelligence, the devotion, faithfulness, docility, and interest in the sport, of these admirable animals, fit them in an extraordinary degree for wild-fowl shooting. Coming from the north and accustomed to playing in the water, they can, without danger, face the element in its coldest state; and whether it be to chase a stick thrown into the waves by their youthful human playmates, or to recover ducks shot by their sporting owner, they take naturally to all aquatic amusements.

Nevertheless, as has been heretofore remarked, although it is well to have a slight strain of the Newfoundland, no distinct breed is necessary to make a good retriever. Our ordinary setters are sometimes

unsurpassable for the purpose; and any tractable dog, if well trained, will answer in a measure.

How different it is to stand in the narrow skiff among the tall reeds at early dawn, with the eager and expectant, though humble, associate, crouched in the bottom upon his especial mat, and there in the increasing light that paints the east with many changing hues, to single out the best chances from the passing flocks, and have your skill doubly enhanced by the intelligent coöperation of your companion; than to lie, cramped, cold, and suffering, all through the weary hours, stretched at full length upon your back with eyes staring up to Heaven and straining to catch a glimpse of the horizon over your beard or forehead; and occasionally to rise to an equally constrained posture that is neither sitting nor lying, and do your best to discharge your gun with some judgment at a passing flock of fowl! Who can hesitate in selecting the mode in which he will pursue the sport of wild-fowl shooting? Most of the favorite varieties of ducks, including many that are known among ornithologists as sea-ducks, *fuligulæ*, are found in the many scattered ponds, the shallow marshes, or the extensive inland seas of the great west; while the swans and geese are shot, the former along the larger rivers and lakes, and the latter in the corn-fields. It is true that the enormous flocks that collect in the lagoons and bays of the South are rarely seen; but the flight of small bodies or single birds is more continuous, and probably the total number even larger.

It is impossible to particularize localities as pre-eminent for this sport where so many are good; and the innumerable streams, lakelets, drowned lands, swamps, rivers, lakes, cultivated fields, and even open prairies of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and the Western States generally, abound in their seasons with various descriptions of wild-fowl; and for a statement of the mode of their pursuit, and the views of their pursuers, no better course can be taken than to give an account of a few days in one of the numerous tributary bays of Lake Erie.

Although the use of a light skiff is always desirable and adds enormously to the comfort of the shooter, circumstances will often arise that will deprive him of its use; and in such case he has no better resource than to don his long wading boots, and tramp through the shallow water until he comes to a favorable spot, perhaps the deserted house of a family of beavers; and there, perched upon its summit and concealed by the surrounding reeds, to resign himself to the inevitable inconveniences of his position. When his feet grow cold in spite of their india-rubber casing, and his muscles weary for want of rest, he will long for the dry skiff; and when he comes to "back" his load of game—consisting, if he is successful, of geese, canvas-backs, red-heads, mallards, blue-bills, widgeons, and perhaps a swan—across the muddy flats a mile or two to dry land, he will long for it still more intensely.

For shooting ducks the best weather is dark, or even rainy, as at such times the birds fly closer to

the earth, being unable to follow their course, and do not perceive the sportsman so readily. But as a natural consequence, the sportsman's ammunition becomes damp and his clothes wet, while the old-fogy owner of the muzzle-loader will unjustly anathematize Eley's water-proof caps when his gun misses fire, instead of blaming his own stupidity. The insides of barrels will foul and the outsides rust; the loading-stick will become dirty and the sportsman's hands and face grimy; and then the happy possessor of the breech-loader, when he handles his clean cartridges, although one occasionally may stick, will thank his good fortune and bless Lefaucheaux.

A strong wind forces the birds out of their safe course, up and down the open "leads," upon the various points where the fowler, selecting the most favorable by watching the flight, takes his stand; and, when they are heading against it, reduces their speed from the lightning rate of ninety miles an hour to reasonable deliberation; but when they are travelling with it, renders the art of killing them one of no easy acquisition.

In shooting wild-fowl, or in fact any rapid flying birds, it is necessary to aim ahead of them — not that the gun is actually fired ahead of them, but to allow for the time, hardly perceptible to man, but noticeable in the changed position of the birds, necessary to discharge the piece; and the distance allowed must depend not only on the rapidity of their flight, but on the customary quickness of the marksman. The great fault of sportsmen is, that

they shoot below and behind their birds; and this is particularly apt to be the case where the game, as with wild-fowl, appears to move more slowly than it really does.

To the novice in this peculiar sport, the second difficulty to overcome will be the inability to judge distances. Not only do objects appear over the water nearer than they really are, but there is no neighboring object that will aid the judgment in coming to a correct conclusion; and by changes in the weather birds in the air will seem to be nearer or further off, and their plumage will be more or less distinctly visible, according to circumstances. After several days' experience in dark, cloudy weather, the greatest proficient will, on the first ensuing day of bright sunshine, throw away many useless shots at impracticable distances.

There is no criterion to determine the distance of any bird high above the horizon, and any recommendation to wait till the eyes can be seen—the book-maker's rule—is worse than useless; it is a matter of experience and judgment.

There is no better time to kill ducks than when they are coming head on, the commonly promulgated idea that their feathers will turn the heavy shot being simply absurd; and all the marksman has to do is to cover his bird, pitch his gun a trifle upwards, and pull the trigger.

In the matter of ammunition, the high numbers of shot and the light charges of powder of old times have changed by general consent; and for

ducks, one ounce and a quarter of No. 4 or 5, and perhaps No. 3 late in the season, and of No. 1 or 2 for geese, driven out of the ordinary field-gun by three and a half drachms of powder, will be found preferable. I say a field-gun, because, although the heavy duck-gun, with its enormous charge of six drachms of powder and three ounces of shot, is undoubtedly more killing when discharged into large flocks, the waste of ammunition would be immense were it used at the scattering flight of the western country.

Many kinds of wild-fowl will, like bay-snipe, be attracted by an imitation of their cry; and, when decoys are used, the mastery of these calls is necessary to the proficiency of the bayman. But at the West, where the use of decoys is not customary, and where the nature of the ground prevents full advantage being obtained from these devices, a knowledge of the art is not so necessary. Nevertheless, there is something thrilling in the "honk" of the wild goose; when it is heard, the sportsman is earnest in his efforts to imitate it, and if successful—which he often is, for the bird responds readily—is not only proud of the result, but amply rewarded for his skill.

In shooting from any species of cover, when ducks are approaching, it is more important not to move than to be well hid; the slightest motion startles and alarms the birds, that would possibly have approached the sportsman in full view if he had remained motionless. If they are suddenly perceived

near at hand while the sportsman is standing erect, let him remain so without stirring a muscle, and not attempt to dodge down into the blind. The ducks may not notice him—especially if his dress is of a suitable color—among the reeds, but will inevitably catch sight of the least movement.

So much for general suggestions and advice, which will be regarded or disregarded by the gentlemen for whom this work is written, much according to their previously conceived ideas; and which may or may not be correct according to the opportunities of judging, and the skill of turning them to account, of the writer; and now we will record a few personal experiences, in the hope, if not of further elucidating and supporting the views herein expressed, of furnishing the reader with more interesting matter.

CHAPTER IX.

DUCK-SHOOTING ON THE INLAND LAKES.

Out West—'way out West—a long distance from our eastern cities in miles, but now, thanks to steam and iron, a short one in hours, upon an island lying in a bay that debouches into one of the great chain of lakes, is situated a large, neat, white-painted and comfortable house, where a club of sportsmen meet to celebrate the advent and presence of the wild ducks. The mansion—for it deserves that name from its extent and many conveniences—peeps out from amid the elms and hickories that cover the point upon which it stands, almost concealed in summer by their foliage, but in winter protected, as it were, by their bare, gaunt limbs. From the piazza that extends along the front a plank pathway leads to the wharf, which shelves into the water, like the levees on the Mississippi, and down or up which each sportsman can, unaided, run his light boat at his own sweet will. Adjoining the wharf is the out-house, where the boats are stored in tiers, one above another, and are protected summer and winter from the weather. Not far off stands that most important building, a commodious ice-house, suggestive of the luxuries and comforts that a better acquaintance with the ways of the place will realize.

The island is not large, but wherever it is tillable, a garden, orchard, and grapery have been planted, and furnish the household with delicious fruit and vegetables. Quail have been introduced, and, being protected by the regulations of the establishment, have increased and multiplied; and wild turkeys occasionally commit upon the vines depredations which are condignly punished. It is a lovely spot, far from other habitations, and affords shelter during the fall months to as pleasant a set of sportsmen as can be found the world over.

The President, with his short figure and grey hair, but sharp, clear eye, was selected for his superior success as a marksman, and rarely returns from a day's excursion without a boat-load of game. The Vice-President and Secretary are the only other officers, and upon their fiat it depends whether any outsider shall trespass upon their inland Paradise. Promiscuous invitations were once extended to the brethren of the gun and rod, but so many spurious counterfeits presented themselves, that a stringent rule had to be adopted to exclude all but the genuine article.

The shooting lasts from the 1st of September till the chill breath of winter closes the bay and drives the birds to more hospitable localities. It is pursued in a small, light, flat-bottomed boat, similar, on a larger pattern, to the rail-boats used on the Delaware. Each boat is provided with a pair of oars working on pins that fit into outriggers; and also with a long setting-pole, which has a bent wire, like

a tiny two-pronged pitchfork, on the end, to catch against the reeds in poling. A place is made to rest the gun on upon one of the thwarts; an ammunition-box, containing separate compartments for shot of several sizes, wads, and caps, is stowed away in the bottom, and a heavy loading-stick, in addition to the ramrod, is carried. Two guns are an absolute necessity, unless the sportsman has a breech-loader; for many birds are crippled and require a second shot before they escape into the thick weeds, where they are hopelessly lost; and when the flight is rapid, he requires, at least, four barrels, and would be thankful if he could manage more.

The bay, which stretches in vast extent, is filled with high reeds and wild rice, and rarely exceeds a few feet in depth except where open passages mark the deeper channels. It is a matter of no little intricacy for a stranger to find his way, and after nightfall the oldest *habitué* will often become bewildered, as the various bunches of weeds, tufts of rice, or stretches of pond lilies look alike, and when a southerly wind is blowing the water falls and leaves all but the deep channels nearly or quite bare. If a man under such circumstances once loses his course he may as well make up his mind to pass the night in his boat; though he work himself almost to death trying to pole over bare spots, he will but travel in a circle and grow momentarily more bewildered.

I landed at the wharf in the middle of October, of a year ever famous for the immense numbers of

birds that were killed during it, and met with a hearty greeting from a goodly company collected round the groaning board of mine host of the white-flowing locks. There was our worthy President, and our Secretary and Treasurer gracefully combined in one; there our lucky man and the unlucky man, and there a famous black-bass fisherman, and there my special friend, and others of lesser note.

We sat down to tea with roasted canvas-backs at one end of the table, broiled steaks at the other, and beautiful potatoes flanking each that had been raised on our own premises and were tumbling to white particles, as though they were trying to be flour; jolly, round, baked apples sitting complacently in their own juice, vegetables of all sorts, grapes from our grapery, and so many other inward comforts that one hardly knew where to begin and never knew where to leave off. Our comely hostess, who had prepared these good things, poured out the tea for us, and put in sly remarks to her favorites; and, altogether, it was truly pleasant.

After tea and adjournment to the sitting-room, while enjoying the practical cigar or comfortable pipe, we discussed the varied fortunes of the day and the probabilities of the morrow; compared views on the habits of fish, flesh, or fowl, and related experiences of former expeditions. But eager for the morning sun, we retired early and dreamed of victory.

As soon as the lazy dawn streaked the east, dressing being done by candle-light, we hastily disposed

of our breakfast and prepared for the start. Having selected our boats and arranged them on the wharf, we stowed our guns, ammunition-boxes, overclothes, a few decoys, and such other articles as fancy suggested; and then taking two little tin pails, we put a nice lunch of cold duck, steak, bread, pickles, cake, and fruit in one, and into the other water with a large lump of ice bobbing around in the centre; and thus equipped, each man slid his boat down the inclined wharf, and shipping his oars, pulled for his favorite location.

My friend and myself joined forces, and made our first pause at a little bunch of wild rice not far from the house, called Fort Ossawatomie. Decoys are not generally used in this region, as they cannot be seen from any considerable distance by the birds on account of the reeds; but my friend had left his at this place over night, and they were still "bobbing around"—pretending to swim and looking deceitfully innocent—when we ensconced ourselves among the reeds near by, crowding down into the bottom of our boats well out of view.

Several flocks were seen hovering over the horizon, or moving along in the distance, scarcely discernible against the morning clouds; and although occasionally they bade fair to approach, our hopes were destined to disappointment, till a single bird turned and headed directly towards us. When a bird is approaching head on, it is almost impossible to tell whether he is not going directly from you; and at times, except for his growing plainer every moment,

we should have doubted which way this bird was flying. Once he turned, from a change of fancy or fearing danger, but perceiving some other cause of alarm he again straightened his course towards us.

We were bent down, peering eagerly through the high reeds, as at last he came by, within a long gunshot, on the side of my companion. The latter, rising at the exact moment, wheeled round, brought up his gun, and fired in an instant. It was just within range, but the bird turned over, killed dead, and fell with a great splash into the water, sending the spray six feet into the air. Seizing the pole, I pushed out to him, and found that he was a blue-bill, one of the best birds of the Western waters, and at this time in perfection.

We again concealed ourselves; but noticing that the birds shunned the spot, I determined to leave it, and pushed out alone to one of the principal landmarks, where the landscape presents so great a uniformity—a large umbrella-like elm upon the distant shore. I did not follow the regular channel; and at first the way was a difficult one, being directly through a fringe of wild rice, where the water was shallow and the stalks reached high above my head, but beyond, an open patch of water-lilies stretched for half a mile.

The broad, smooth leaves of this remarkable plant, far larger than those of the pond-lilies of the Eastern States, lay in numbers upon, or half buried in, the water; while standing up a few feet above its surface with their straight stems, and gracefully

waving in the wind, were the cup-like pods that contain the seeds.

When the pods first form the seeds are entirely hidden from view, but as they increase in size, holes form in the covering, through which they peep as through a window. The seeds and pod are originally green, but darken and turn blue, and then brown, as the season advances; and the holes, which begin by being small, become larger till they open sufficiently for the seeds to fall out. The seeds or berries are elliptical in shape and of almost the size of a chestnut; in the green state they are soft, and can be readily cut with a knife; but when ripe and black, they are as hard as stone, and will turn the edge of a knife like agate.

When about half ripe, or bluish in color, they are good to eat, and after the removal of a little green sprout hidden in the centre, are sweet, tasting much the same as a chestnut. As they ripen and their covering recedes, their stems hold them upright; but the first heavy frost breaks down the stems, and lets the seed fall out into the water, where they lie till next year.

The working of nature is wonderful, as no one observes more frequently than the sportsman; all this care is taken to preserve the seeds for their appointed work. If they were permitted to fall out when green or even half ripe, the action of the water would soften and destroy them; extreme hardness is necessary to resist its action for so long a time; while, on the other hand, if they were retained

longer and exposed to excessive cold, their germinating principle would be annihilated.

Wood-ducks are fond of them in their unripe state, and frequent the marshes, especially in the early fall, to procure a supply. With a view to nuts and grapes for dessert, I paused to gather a number of pods, and was carelessly pushing along, when from out a bunch of weeds, with a great clatter, sprang a couple of those birds. Dropping the setting-pole, I threw myself forward to seize the gun; but for this shooting, infinite practice and great aptitude are required; and although well accustomed to kill rail from the floating cockle-shells on the Delaware river, and able to take one end of a birch canoe with any man, I was bunglingly in my own way, and, when at last one barrel was discharged, a shameful miss was the only result. Anathematizing my awkwardness, I was dropping the butt to reload, when, roused by the report, another bird sprang not more than twenty yards off. In an instant the gun was at my shoulder, and, when the fire streamed forth, the bird doubled up, riddled with shot, and pitched forward into the weeds. It was a drake, and, although young, the plumage was resplendent with the green, brown, and mottle of the most beautiful denizen of our waters—the elegant wood-duck.

Several more rose, far out of range, before the lilies were passed and my destination in the open channel reached. Stopping on the brink of the lat-

ter, to watch the flight of the birds, I noticed that they frequently crossed a reedy island in the middle of the channel, and consequently proceeded to conceal myself in what among our association is called the Little Bunker. It was an admirable location; the channel on each side did not exceed one hundred yards in width, and the weather having become thick, with an easterly wind blowing and a slight rain driving, the promise of sport was excellent.

Once fairly hidden, and my work commenced; bird after bird and flock after flock approached, and although the boat, even while pressed in among and steadied by the stiff reeds, was far from firm, a goodly number was soon collected. How much more exhilarating is this noble sport as it is pursued in the West than upon our Atlantic coast, where, stretched upon his back in a coffin-like battery, the sportsman has to lie for hours cooling his heels and exhausting his patience! There he is not confined to one position; but, after shooting down a bird, has the excitement of pushing after it, and, if it is only wounded, of following it, perhaps in a long chase before it is retrieved; and then he must make all haste to return to the hiding-place, over which the birds are flying finely in his absence, and thus he keeps up a glow and fire of activity and exercise.

It is a glorious sight to see a noble flock of ducks approach; to watch them with trembling alternations of fear and hope as they waver in their course,

as they crowd together or separate, as they swing first one flank of their array forward, then the other; as they draw nearer and nearer, breathlessly to wait the proper time, and, with quick eye and sure aim, select a pair, or perhaps more, with each barrel. It is still more glorious to see them fall—doubled up if killed dead, turning over and over if shot in the head, and slanting down if only wounded, driving up the spray in mimic fountains as they strike; and glorious, too, the chase after the wounded—with straining muscles to follow his rapid wake, and, when he dives, catching the first glimpse of his reappearance to plant the shot from an extra gun in a vital spot. Glorious to survey the prizes, glorious to think over and relate the successful event, and glorious to listen to the tales of others.

Sad, however, is it when the flock turns off and pushes far out to the open water; sadder still when the aim is not true and the bird goes by uninjured; sad when the chase is unsuccessful and the weeds hide the prey, or he dives to grasp a root and never reappears; and saddest of all to fall overboard out of your frail bark—a fate that sooner or later awaits every one that shoots ducks from little boats.

I had had all these experiences except the last, and almost that—when pushing through the weeds, my friend appeared, attracted by my rapid firing, and after comparing our respective counts, ensconced himself in one of the points opposite me on the channel. By this plan all birds that came between

us gave one or the other a shot, and each could mark birds approaching the other from behind.

The morning passed rapidly away amid splendid shooting, and noon found us united in my hiding-place to eat a sociable meal together. During the middle of the day the birds repose, and the sportsman employs the time in satisfying the cravings of hunger or even in a nap, interrupted though he may be in either by an occasional whirr of wings, that, when it is too late, informs him of lost opportunities.

We talked over matters. As the day had cleared off and become warm, the prospect of sport for some hours at least was over, and my friend suggested we should visit the snipe ground. To approve the suggestion, to push out and to ship our oars, was the work of a moment, and we were soon at Mud Creek bridge, a pull of about two miles through an open lead, from which the ducks were continuously springing on our approach. Having anchored our boats a short distance from shore, to prevent the wild hogs paying us a visit, we waded to land, and substituting small shot for the heavy charges in our guns, walked a few yards up the road and crossed the fence.

I had brought my setter with me, and he had proved himself a model of quietness in the boat, from the bottom of which he had raised his head only once all day; when my first duck dropped he rose on his haunches, and watching where it fell, sniffed at it as I pushed up, and then, satisfied he had no part in such sport, lay down to sleep.

The moment he touched land his vigor returned; at a motion, he darted out into the meadow of alternating broad slanks and high field grass that lay before us, and ere he had traversed fifty yards, as he approached an open spot, hesitated, drew cautiously, and finally paused on a firm point. Stepping to him as fast as the impressible nature of the ground permitted, we flushed three birds, rising as they are apt to do one after the other, and killed two, one springing wide and escaping unshot at.

While going to retrieve the dead birds we flushed two more, both of which were bagged, one a long shot, wing-tipped, and not recovered till some time afterwards; for, ere we reached him, we had sprung a dozen, most of which were duly accounted for. The missed birds, after circling round high in the air, returned to the neighborhood of their original locality, and pitching down head-foremost, concealed themselves among the high grass near enough to lure us to their pursuit.

The walking was terribly hard; the clayey mud uncommonly tenacious; the day was already well advanced, and splendid as was the sport, we resolved, after having pretty well exhausted ourselves and bagged twenty-six birds, that we must hasten back to the rice swamp, or we should lose the evening's shooting.

We returned to our boats, and stowing the game, pulled with the utmost vigor down the channel of Mud Creek, and in a short time were again hidden among the high reeds, awaiting the ducks. This

time my friend selected a spot near a sort of semi-island, that was submerged or not, according to the state of the water, and near which was a favorite roosting-place.

The sun was leisurely dropping down the western sky, throwing his slanting rays across the broad bay, and lighting up the distant club-house as by a fire. The fringe of land, trees, and bushes, that shut out the horizon and rose but little above the water level, was growing dim and hazy of outline. The wind had died away; and stillness, but for the quacking of the ducks, the splashing of the coots, or so-called mud-hens, and the occasional report of a gun, reigned supreme. A lethargy seemed to have fallen upon the birds; a distant flock alone would at long intervals greet our eyes, and for some time our evening's sport bade fair to prove a failure.

However, as the sun was about to sink, the birds began to arrive, at first one or two at a time, then more rapidly and in larger flocks, till at last it was one steady stream and whirr of wings. Faster than we could load, faster than we could shoot, or could have shot had we had fifty guns, from all quarters and of all kinds they streamed past; now the sharp whistle of the teal, then the rush of the mallard, sometimes high over our heads, at others darting close beside us; by ones, by twos, by dozens, by hundreds, crowded together in masses or stretched in open lines, in all variety of ways, but in one uninterrupted flight.

Such shooting rarely blesses the fortunate sports-

man; we drove down our charges as best we could, sometimes having one barrel loaded or half loaded, sometimes the other, oftener neither, when we were interrupted with such glorious chances; our nerves, eyes, and muscles were on the strain, and to this day we have only to regret that we did not then possess a breech-loader.

The air was alive with birds; the rustle of their wings made one continuous hum; the heavy flocks approached and passed us with a sound like the gusty breeze of an autumn night rattling through the dying leaves. When the sun fled and darkness seemed to spring up around us, they appeared in the most unexpected and bewildering manner; at one time from out of the glorious brilliancy of the western sky, then from the deep gloom of the opposite quarter, darting across us or plunging down into the weeds near by.

Our birds lay where they fell, and when the approaching night bade us depart, we retrieved sixty-seven—the result of about one hour's shooting—doubtless losing numbers that were not noticed, or which, being wounded, escaped. Had we not been awkward from a year's idleness, or had we shot as the professionals of Long Island and each used a breech-loader, I could hardly say how many we might not have killed. As it was, the sport was wonderful, and the result sufficient to satisfy our ambition.

We lost no time in escaping from the weeds into the channel-ways, whither the open-water ducks—

the red-heads and canvas-backs—had preceded us, and were still directing their flight; and then started for the few dim trees that we knew surrounded the club-house, rousing in our course immense flocks of the worthless American coot, *Fulica Americana*, the mud-hen of the natives.

The wharf reached, the boats landed, supper over, the birds counted and registered, the social pipe illumined, and we gathered in a circle round the fire of our parlor for improving conversation.

"How many birds have we killed this year?" inquired a member.

"The record shows a goodly total of 2,351," replied the Secretary, turning to the register; "almost as many already as the entire return of last season, during which we only killed 2,908."

"And the better varieties seem this year to be more numerous."

"In that particular there is surprising uniformity from year to year. Last season the return is made up as follows: canvas-backs, 246; red-heads, 122; blue-bills, 395; mallards, 540; dusky-ducks, 108; wood-ducks, 601; blue-winged teal, 474; green-winged teal, 39; widgeons, 204; pin-tails, 50; gadwalls, 67; spoonbills, 11; ruddy-ducks, 2; butter-balls, 7; geese, 2; quail, 14; cormorants, 2; turkeys, 3; great hell-diver, 1; and this year the average is about the same."

"But I think," said the President, "the canvas-backs and red-heads are earlier and better than usual."

"They are rather earlier in making their appearance abundantly. The variation is never great, however, and the birds appear in the following order: the wood-ducks first, being plentiful early in September; the blue-winged teal begin to surpass them about the 20th of that month, and soon afterward the mallards arrive; widgeons are abundant by the middle of October, and canvas-backs and red-heads are the latest."

"Ah," burst forth the unlucky man, enthusiastically, "the wood-duck shooting is my favorite; when they rise from the lilies they are easier to kill than when flying past at full speed; and you have a punter to pole the boat and help mark the wounded birds."

"October has my preference," responded the President, with glowing eye; "the large ducks—the mallards, canvas-backs, and red-heads—have then arrived; the blue-bills and teal are numerous; and, when a single teal flies past, a man has to know how to handle his gun to keel him over handsomely."

"But mallards dodge, when you rise to shoot, at the report of the first barrel; and red-heads and canvas-backs, if not killed stone dead, dive and swim off under water, or, catching the weeds in their bills, hold on after death and never reappear. Have you noticed the large teeth, or nicks, in the bills, especially of red-heads?"

"Yes. Those long, recurved teeth aid them in tearing up the wild celery, on which they feed. I

have had them serve me the trick you complain of when they were at the last gasp—so nearly dead, that I have pushed out and been on the point of picking them up. When not so badly hurt, they will swim off with their bill only projecting above the surface, and if there is the least wind this is entirely invisible. The trick is known to others of the duck family; even the ingenuous wood-duck will have recourse to the same mean subterfuge occasionally, as one that was but slightly wounded proved to me to-day."

"Is it true," inquired the fisherman, "that other ducks steal from the canvas-backs the wild celery that they have exhausted themselves in procuring?"

"The widgeons have the credit of doing so; but I have never seen, and somewhat doubt it. The canvas-back is too large and strong a duck to be readily trifled with, and is by no means exhausted by diving to the depth of a few feet after celery. This celery, as we call it—which has a long, delicate leaf, resembling broad-grass, and bears the name of *Zostera valisneria* among the botanists—grows in water about five feet deep, and its roots furnish the favorite and most fattening food of the canvas-backs, red-heads, and, strange to say, mud-hens. The widgeon is not a large nor powerful duck; can dive no further than to put its head under water, while its tail stands perpendicularly above the surface; and, although a terrible torment to the weak and gentle mud-hen, would think twice

before incensing the fierce and powerful canvas-back. Of a calm day it is amusing to watch the flocks of noisy mud-hens, collected in front of the club-house, diving for their food, and being robbed of it by the widgeons. The latter swims rapidly among them, and no sooner does he espy one coming to the surface, with his bill full of celery, than he pounces upon and carries it off. He is watchful and voracious, and quickly devours the food; while the injured mud-hen, with a resigned look, takes a long breath and dives for another morsel."

"Do they not combine to drive the robber away?"

"Occasionally; but he minds their blows as little as their scoldings, and generally swims off with his prize. The canvas-back, however, would soon teach him better manners."

"Are the western canvas-backs as delicate and high-flavored as those of the Chesapeake?"

"Fully so, as my friends in New York, who have been fortunate enough to share my luck, have often testified. Of course, when they first come they are thin and poor, but having the same food as is found in the Chesapeake, and being less disturbed, they soon attain excellent condition, and are entirely free from the slightest sedgy flavor."

"That sedgy or fishy taste is confined mainly to birds shot on the salt water, and is rarely found in any birds killed upon the inland lakes, so that many —for instance the bay-snipe—that are barely passable when shot along the coast, are excellent in the interior."

"And yet the naturalists class the canvas-back among *fuligulæ*, or sea ducks."

"That arises from some scientific peculiarity, and is not universal. He is certainly a fresh-water duck, and thousands are shot here yearly."

"I lose a great many crippled birds," said the unlucky man, meditatively; "I wonder what becomes of them all?"

"Many die, a few recover, some are frozen in when the bay freezes over; after the first hard frost large numbers can be picked up, but they are so poor as only to be fit to send to the New York market. Most sportsmen lose many ducks that they should recover; considerable practice is required to mark well, but the search after a bird should be thorough, and not lightly abandoned. The boat, when pushed into the reeds, must be so placed that it can be easily shoved off, and the pole kept ready for instant use. If, however, a mallard is only wounded, and falls into the weeds, it is useless to go after him.

"On the other hand, if a canvas-back, but slightly touched, falls in open water, he will be rarely recovered; the one hides in the weeds, the other dives and swims under water prodigiously. The mallard and canvas-back are the types of two classes—the former is a marsh duck, the latter an open-water duck. The mallard lives on the pond-lily seeds, and affects the shallow, muddy pond-holes; the canvas-back seeks the broad channels, and devours the roots of plants; the one dodges at the flash of the gun or sight of the sportsman, the other moves ma-

jestically onward, regardless of the havoc that the heavy discharges make in his ranks. Of nearly the same size, of unsurpassable delicacy on the table, of equal vigor, they differ utterly in their habits."

"Speaking of types," said the unlucky man, recalling unpleasant reminiscences of numerous misses, "you might call blue-bills types of the fast-flying and dodging ducks. When they come down before a stiff wind, and are making their best time, lightning is slow by comparison, and shot does not seem to me to go quite fast enough."

"They are the scaup or broad-bill of the East, *Fuligula Marila*, and are aptly termed the bullet-winged duck. They are undoubtedly the most difficult duck to kill that flies. I have known a thorough sportsman and excellent shot on quail, shoot all day at them without killing one. You must make great allowance for their speed."

"And, moreover," added the President, "you must load properly; there must be powder enough behind the shot to send it clear through the bird; one pellet driven in that way will kill a bird that would carry off a dozen lodged beneath the skin or in the flesh."

"Perhaps so, but I doubt its feasibility," was the response; "no small shot was ever, in my opinion, driven through the body of a duck with any charge of powder at over thirty yards. I use light powder and plenty of shot."

This announcement was received with unanimous dissent, and the President expressed the general feeling when he continued—

"Heavy shot will make a gun recoil painfully; but if the shot is light the charge of powder may be large without producing unpleasant effects; the shot will be driven quick and strong, and the bird deprived of life instantaneously. Perhaps the pellets are not driven through the body, but the blow is severer and the shock is more stunning. I use one ounce of shot and three drachms of powder, and would prefer to increase rather than diminish the powder. It is a mistake to suppose powder does not burn because black particles fall to the ground if it is fired over snow or white paper; these, I take it, are flakes of charcoal and not powder, and some will fall, no matter how light may be the load."

"For my part," persisted the unlucky man, "I think the crippling of birds arises from our inability to judge distances, and from our firing at birds out of reasonable range. The patent breech was meant to remedy the necessity for such heavy charges of powder as are used in the old-fashioned flint-locks. Johnston, the author of an admirable treatise on shooting, which is now out of print, is my authority, and he says that an over-charge of powder makes a gun scatter prodigiously without adding proportionately to the force."

"That depends upon the character of the bore," answered the Secretary; "if it is relieved at the breech, and after narrowing above, made a perfect cylinder towards the muzzle, the more the powder the better it will shoot."

Seeing that an interminable discussion was about

to open, branching off, in all likelihood, into the comparative qualities of powder and manufacturers of guns, the President interposed.

"This is a dry, serious, and solemn conversation, and as every member has already made up his mind on the subject, not very improving; who will volunteer to tell a story or sing a song?"

"My friend here," replied the unlucky, pointing to the lucky, man, "once intimated to me that his first day's duck-shooting was the best and pleasantest he ever had, but would never give me the satisfaction of the particulars."

"The story, the story, let us have the story!" burst forth the chorus, with delight.

"I will tell it on one condition," responded the party addressed: "that the gentleman who suggested it shall give a true account of his first day's trout-fishing."

All hands shouted with delight at the prospect of two stories, scenting a joke in the suggestion, but the unlucky man replied, pitifully, "I will if I must, but there are more agreeable episodes in my existence."

"Never mind that; if I confess, so must you.

"Many years ago, gentlemen, myself and a friend had driven down on Long Island for a few days at the ducks. He was an old sportsman, and promised to initiate me, who had acquired considerable facility with my gun, but had never yet been in a battery on the bay.

"It is not necessary to say at what house we stop-

ped; the island is dotted with them—the best in the country—and as it was necessary to be up at two o'clock in the morning in order to follow down the creek and row out to the feeding grounds, we retired early. Strict injunctions were left with the hostler to wake us at the appointed hour; but as there was a grand ball going on in the hall adjoining the hotel, his recollection was not to be depended upon.

"The beds were good; but, either disturbed by dreams of ducks or sounds of revelry, my sleep was fitful. I was at last awakened by a loud noise, which I took to be some one knocking at the door, and sleepily rising, saw a light shining through the crack as it stood ajar. I woke my companion, who responded with an unwilling grunt, and thinking the hostler had left the candle for our accommodation, I stepped out to get it.

"The night was cold, my dress was light and airy, the distant sounds of expiring revelry were still faintly audible, and I hastened to get the light that I might hurry on warmer clothes. To my surprise, on opening the door, the candle appeared to be some yards off on the floor, in the middle of what seemed to be an adjoining room. My eyes, dazzled by the sudden change from total darkness, saw little as I stumbled forward; but when I turned, light in hand, to regain my room, I came suddenly upon a bed, and stopped as though shot.

"Gentlemen, a bed is nothing unusual or surprising in a country tavern, but there is sometimes a

great deal in it. In this particular instance there was not even much in it, but that little was of the female sex. Astonishment changed to admiration. She was very pretty, her rosy cheek rested pillowed on one little hand, while the other arm was thrown gracefully across her head, framing her innocent child-like face in a cloud of white. She was lying on her side, and below her arm the bed-clothes sank down to her waist and then rose in a magnificent swell. Her hair in massive curls poured upon the pillow, and one strayed round her throat and joined with the white drapery in protecting her neck.

"Admiration changed to curiosity. I stepped nearer, bringing the light so that while it did not shine strongly on her eyes, it fell upon the white drapery. Man is but a weak creature, liable to be swayed by evil passions. Curiosity has always been my besetting sin, and sudden temptations ought to be included among the other sudden dangers in the prayer-book. In consequence of the position of her arm, the clothes had fallen back from her shoulders, but that envious curl was cruelly unsatisfying; the white drapery rose and fell with the long breathing of her sleep. My first impulse was to retire noiselessly, but curiosity conquered; she slept so sweetly, so gracefully, and so soundly. Approaching nearer, stealthily, step by step, I carefully put forward one hand, and gently touched the curl—she did not move—then quietly gathering it up, I began slowly drawing it aside. It lifted and fell with the marble neck beneath like a brown vein across it, but no

other motion testified that life pervaded her unconscious beauty."

A pause; the chorus, excited—"What next? what next?"

"Gentlemen, it would have been a shameful act to take advantage of her innocent sleep—a mean, unworthy, contemptible act. It is enough to say, gentlemen, I did not commit it—for at that moment she moved."

CHORUS—"Oh!"

"She moved, and was evidently about to wake."

CHORUS—"What did you do then?"

"Modesty is another of my failings; it is no small matter to be found by a lady in her bed-room, and you must recollect my dress was scanty. Wishing, therefore, to spare her feelings as much as my own, I put out the light, and standing still, listened. From the sound as she moved, it was clear that she was awake and sitting up in bed. I kept as quiet as a mouse, no longer daring to stir and hardly daring to breathe.

"'Who is there?' asked the sweetest little sleepy voice in the world; it was evidently time for me to leave if the feelings of either side were to be spared.

"'Husband, is that you? How late you are, Oscar. I wish there were no balls; you have let the light go out and will have to undress in the dark, and you have been drinking; you do not answer, what are you mumbling in that husky voice; you do not walk steady, you shuffle with your feet; let me smell your breath, sir!'

"Another of my failings is inability to say no. A moment's consideration would have told me it was far from honorable to assume the place of another person, and that person the husband of a pretty woman; but in my state of hesitancy or virtuous indignation at being falsely accused of drinking, or without really anticipating what would happen, I obeyed; and bringing my face near hers, encountered the sweetest pair of lips in Christendom.

"'I am not quite sure,' she said, 'let me see again.'

"Now that was clearly her fault, and left me no excuse for refusing her absolute satisfaction.

"'Make haste, Oscar,' she whispered, 'how cold you are.'"

The lucky man paused, while the chorus breathlessly broke in with:

"Did you make haste?"

"Gentlemen, man is a contemptible creature in his treatment of woman; she is infinitely his superior in every good quality, and he absolutely takes advantage of his baser capacities to betray her superior nature. He matches his cunning against her truthfulness, his selfishness against her disinterestedness, his deceitfulness against her affection. Woman's nobleness of heart is a provision of nature to prevent the degeneration of our species; were women as bad as men, our children would be brutes or idiots. Traits of mind and heart are transmitted—"

CHORUS.—"Never mind all that, did you make haste?"

"Gentlemen, with those feelings, I could not long remain in that room; it was time to make haste; and mumbling some excuse, I escaped before a noise, that seemed to be ascending the stairs, approached. My friend wondered at the time I had been away, abused me for allowing the light to go out, but was easily convinced that the time had been lengthened by his dreams. Virtue is its own reward, and, gentlemen, I never shall regret that night."

CHORUS—"But you have not said a word of the duck-shooting."

"Well, to tell the truth, I heard next day that Oscar was inquiring for me, and concluded that the shooting would be better elsewhere."

The shout of laughter that succeeded this answer died away, and the unlucky man was called upon for his adventure.

UNLUCKY MAN.—"Gentlemen, I can give you no such entertaining history as my friend. In all my life, I never saw a woman unless she was fully dressed and prepared for it—much as I would like to—for I am not endowed with one half of his virtuous sentiments. But my adventure also occurred on Long Island, whither I had gone to learn trout-fishing. I had a new rod of Conroy's best and most expensive pattern, a book full of flies, a basket, a bait-box, a net, a gaff, and all things appurtenant, and was especially proud of my fishing suit, which a brother of the angle had kindly selected for me. My boots came above my knees, and were of yellow Russian leather, with which my brown pants matched ad-

mirably, while a blue vest, a white flannel coat, red neck-tie and crimson cap, combined all the colors that were least likely to alarm the fish.

"The other anglers collected at the hotel kindly aided me with their advice, for which I was truly grateful. They rigged out my leader with flies, and convincingly proving that the more flies used the more fish must be taken, fastened on thirteen. Conroy had hardly served me fairly in selecting my assortment, for they were pronounced by all not to be half large or bright enough. It was clear that the larger the fly the easier the fish could see it, and the more surely it would catch; so they loaned me a number, principally yellow, green, and blue, which was the more generous of them, as they had but few of the same sort themselves.

"They impressed upon me to be up early, because trout will not bite after sunrise—besides, I knew from the proverb that worms were more easily obtained early; and it was still dark when, having passed a restless few hours, I awoke and dressed. The house was silent, not a person to interfere with me, and having set up my rod the night before, I crept cautiously down stairs. The tip would slash about and knock at the doors and on the walls as I passed, and gave me great trouble in turning the corners of the stairs, but I reached the hall door safely and stepped out upon the piazza.

"I had hardly congratulated myself, when, hearing a suspicious growl, and recollecting that the tavern-keeper had a cross mastiff, I turned, and saw

him in the dim light making straight for me. Running was never my forte, but, gentlemen, my speed round that house with that mastiff after me has rarely been equalled; he kept it up well, however, and if he could have turned a corner readily, would have caught me. Recovering my presence of mind in the third round, I darted through the hall door, and slamming it to behind me, heard my enemy bounce against it, and after a growl and a sniff or two, turn away in disgust.

"Upon regaining my breath, I ascended to my room, and loading the revolver which I always carry on dangerous journeys, returned to the attack, determined on revenge. Strange to say, however, the cowardly beast, the moment the pistol was presented at him, uttered a low whine and shrank away. Disgusted with his cowardice, I seized up my rod, which had been dropped in my first flight, and pursuing him howling piteously three times round the house, laid it on him soundly.

"It must have been poor stuff, for the tip broke. Conroy mended it afterwards, without charge, when I told him the circumstances. But I put in a spare one, and having dug my box full of worms, went to the shed where my horse was left standing, ready harnessed, from the night before. There is nothing like attention to these little matters in time; for, if the hostler had had to harness him, he might have detained me many precious minutes.

"A half-hour's drive soon brought me to the pond, and, after hitching the animal to the fence—

for it was necessary to turn into the field from the main road—I walked down to the bank and jumped into a boat. Unfortunately, it was chained to a staple and padlocked; the inn-keeper had forgotten to give me the key. They were all the same but one, lying on the shore and turned bottom up, that did not seem to be sound. No time, however, was to be lost; the streaks in the east were beginning to turn red—an indication that the sun was rising—and the hour for fishing would soon be over. I launched the boat, such as it was, and pushed off.

"Casting the fly is difficult, but casting thirteen flies is almost impossible. The boat was leaky; the fish did not rise, and the water did. I bailed as well as I could with one hand, and fished with the other, till at last, almost exhausted, I saw the sun rise. As a desperate resource, however, the bait-box came into play. I removed the flies and substituted a hook and worm; but while thus employed, and unable to bail, the water gained on me rapidly. Hardly had the bait touched the water before a fine fish seized it. I tried my best to pull him out, but he would not come—the rod was such a miserable, weak affair that it bent like a switch. The trout swam about in every direction, and tried to get under stumps and weeds and to break my line; but I held him fast and reeled in—for my friends had explained to me what the reel was for—and was about to lay down my rod and fish him out with the landing-net, when—the boat sank."

CHORUS—"Could you swim?"

"No; but the water was only up to my arm-pits, and I was about to wade ashore, when a colored gentleman, who had arrived and been sitting on the bank for the last few minutes, shouted to me that it was his boat and I must bring it with me. I answered, savagely, that I would do nothing of the sort, when he began to abuse me and call me thief, and say I had stolen his boat, and he would have me arrested. So I thought I had better comply, and waded along, dragging it after me. The bottom was muddy, and I slipped once or twice and went all under. It was probably then that the fish got off; but my colored friend took pity on me, and pointed out to me the best places to walk.

"I was nearly ashore, and had clambered upon a bog, as the gentleman advised, and, by his direction, I jumped to a piece of nice-looking green grass. I have always thought he deceived me in this, for it turned out to be a quagmire, and I sank at once above my waist in solid, sticky mud. The matter now became serious; my weight is no trifle, and every motion sank me deeper and deeper. I implored the colored man to help me out; to wade in to me, and let me climb on his back; I offered him money profusely; and—would you believe it?—he laughed, he roared, he shouted, he rolled over in an agony of mirth. He asked me whether I was afraid to die—that only cowards were afraid to die. I did not dare to say no, lest he should take me at my word, and was ashamed to say yes; but, as I

kept on sinking, I had to own up that I was afraid, and then he only laughed louder than ever.

"My feelings were beyond description—fury does not adequately describe my rage; but fear so tempered it, that I seemed to change suddenly from the extreme of heat to the extreme of cold. I would begin by swearing at him, and end by imploring; I begged, cursed, prayed, and raved. Overcome by his unrestrained delight, at last I threatened—pouring out upon him the vilest abuse, and dire menaces of what I would do when I did get out. The prospect of that, however, rapidly diminished—the nasty, slimy mud rose by perceptible degrees—and then he made me take back all my threats and apologize to him. In the agony of my returning terror, he actually made me beg his pardon.

"When, however, hope was nearly over with me, he slowly, with maddening deliberation, took a rail from the nearest fence, and, interspersing the operation with much improving advice, began to pry me out. As I rose towards the upper world my courage returned, and my revenge was merely waiting till my body touched *terra firma* to take ample amends. Even that satisfaction was destined to disappointment; for when I was so far out, that with the aid of the rail I could help myself, he dropped it, and, suspecting my intention, he scuttled off as fast as his black legs would carry him.

"What an object I presented after effecting my escape—from head to foot one mass of mud; my

handsome clothes, my hands and face, all blacker than my ebony friend, and stiff and heavy with the noisome conglomeration. After resting for a few minutes, I gathered up my rod and started for the wagon, when what should I see in the other end of the lot but a bull. A single glance showed me what I had to expect; no bull could stand such an object as I was. I ran and he ran. I made for the wagon and he after me. Such a picture as I must have presented, flying from an infuriate bull, may seem funny to you, gentlemen, but was not to me. We both reached the wagon and both went into it together—I into the seat, he into the body; the result being that I went flying out again, on the other side, over the fence. The horse, which at that moment must have been dreaming, or sleeping the sleep he did not have the night before, aroused by the crash, cast one look behind and burst his bonds and fled.

"It was a long walk home; people looked strangely at me on the way, and some unfeeling ones laughed. My wagon was broken, my horse was ruined, my clothes were spoiled; and the only consolation I had, was that my brother anglers at the hotel felt and expressed such intense sympathy for my sufferings."

The resigned tones and manner of the speaker were inimitable, and his story was received with great satisfaction and closed the evening's amusements. All parties having resolved upon an early start, retired early, and enjoyed a rest such as the sportsman only knows.

One of the attachés of our club-house, without whom it would be deprived of many pleasant features, and who is a remarkable and eccentric character, is called Henry—a Canadian Frenchman. He possesses the lightheartedness, the honesty and trustworthiness of that peculiar class, with the strongest prejudices against mean and underhanded actions and those who are guilty of them; he is, in his own obstinate way, devoted to the service of those who enjoy his esteem. Animated with strong dislikes, he is barely polite to those who have excited his distrust, while he will do anything for his favorites. He is a good shot, and thoroughly acquainted with the marsh and the habits of the birds, but on no terms will he make any suggestions as to the most promising localities. To the question, no matter how casually or confidingly uttered:

"Well, Henry, where had I better go, to-day?" He will respond, looking you calmly in the face, and in a slightly admonitory tone:

"You know I never give advice, sir."

His greatest favorites can obtain no more satisfactory answer, and in fact not much information of any kind, from him in relation to the flight or haunts of the birds. He appears to have discovered that knowledge worth having is worth working for, and is resolved that every man shall be his own schoolmaster. He has quite an insight into character, and appreciates the members of the club and their peculiarities.

One day a party, including a number who were not members, had been snipe-shooting, and some of the latter indulged the habit of pushing on before their neighbor to shoot any bird they may have seen alight, or had reason to believe was upon his beat. Afterwards Henry remarked, as a sort of soliloquy, "He was a poor man—did not have much education, and supposed he did not know; but he did not think it right for one sportsman to run in ahead of another in order to shoot a bird before him. Probably he was wrong; but that was the way he felt, and could not help it."

It was this curious individual who waked us the next morning at an hour before daylight, and enjoyed heartily the satisfaction of rousing us up at that unseemly time. We were no way loth, however, and hastily swallowing our breakfasts and launching our boats, pushed out under cover of the darkness for our respective points. As yet the water and land were scarcely distinguishable, and localities could only be determined by intuition. Night was still brooding with outstretched wings on the earth; the sky seemed to be close overhead, and the clouds could not be distinguished from the open heavens. Slowly, however, the outlines of the horizon became apparent; then the heavy masses of lowering cloud that hung in the eastern sky, and left a narrow, transparent strip of light between themselves and the horizon, came out in strong relief; the stars faded and turned dim; trees, bushes, and distant elevations—the minutiæ of the landscape—ap-

peared; long lines of sedge-grass and reeds sprang up from the water; the eastern sky, and especially the bright strip beneath the cloud, became lighter; a roseate tinge spread itself over the meadows, deepening to intensity in the east, and at last the sun peeped over the horizon.

Occasionally ducks will move at the first break of dawn; but frequently, as in the present instance, they do not fly till about sunrise; then the canvas-backs commenced coming in from the open water; the red-heads accompanied them; and the mallards, aroused from safe beds among the reeds, flew with loud quackings overhead. Later, the rapid blue-bills and teal darted past, the pin-tails moved majestically in stately lines, and the diminutive butter-balls hurried by. The rising sun dissipated the clouds, and the increasing wind announced a glorious ducking-day.

To enjoy this sport thoroughly, or to make the most of the chances offered, requires long practice and peculiar skill; but, when this skill has been acquired, no specialty in sportmanship can be carried to higher perfection, or confer more intense delight. To observe quickly and note the direction of flight of the distant flock; to catch sight of the single bird just topping the reeds; to hide well from the sharp eyes of the approaching ducks; to keep a steady footing, yielding to the treacherous motions of the unsteady boat without losing self-command; to measure the distance accurately from birds passing high in air; to select the proper moment to

fire, and to determine correctly the speed of the moving object; to do all these things at once, without hesitation or failure in any particular, requires in a man the highest qualities of a sportsman. The wonder is that success is so often attained; for there are many men who will kill almost every bird that comes fairly within range, and who will tell you before they shoot whether they are sure of killing or not.

Unfortunately our party, although tolerably proficient, were far from perfect. Many were the fair shots missed, or only half hit, and more still were the impossible shots that were wasted. The wind drove the birds upon the long neck of reeds called Grassy Point, where several of us had located ourselves, and the river-scows, or small boats, occasionally passing kept them in motion.

During the morning several flocks of swans were seen, looking, when they passed in front of a dark cloud, like flying snow-flakes. Although somewhat resembling the appearance of geese, at a distance, the beat of their wings and their trumpet-voiced cry are altogether different. They were very shy, keeping far out of range; but excited our nerves at the mere thought of what glory would be conferred if they should happen to come within the proper distance.

One of our party, however, acquired but little credit by a shot which he made at a flock of geese that passed within twenty yards of him. He was of Milesian descent, and explained the occurrence afterwards as follows:

"You see, I was watching them come closer and closer, and making my calculation to pick out two fine ones. I knew the fellow at the head was an old gander, and tough; but right behind him came two tender, juicy youngsters—altogether the fattest and best in the whole flock. Well, it took me some time to make this selection, and, letting the old one go by, I was just about preparing to knock over the two others right and left—and done it I should have, because I intended to, you know. Well, I put up my gun, and was about taking aim, and was waiting for them to get just in the right position—for I was as cool as I am this moment; an old hunter like me is not easily flurried. Well, they were almost ready, and I was on the point of cutting them down, when somebody else—bad luck to him—about a hundred yards off, fired into the flock. Of course they flirted in every direction, and darted about so, that I lost sight of those I selected; and how could you expect me to kill any others when I had made up my mind to have those? You need not laugh because I missed with both barrels; I wouldn't have missed if the birds had been in their proper places, where I was pointing my gun."

So it was that we obtained no geese. But the canvas-backs and mallards, in the early morning, made up for the deficiency; and when, towards midday, they ceased flying, some of our party resolved to pole for wood-ducks.

To do this, as has been heretofore intimated, re-

quires more practice than even shooting from "points"—exacting from the sportsman not merely readiness in handling the gun, but activity of motion and accuracy of balance. The gun, at full cock, is laid in its rack across the thwart; or, as I prefer, from one thwart to another, with the triggers up; the sportsman, standing erect on the stern, wields his pole with care, avoiding noise, and never by any chance touching the side of the boat with it, for nothing alarms the birds so much as rapping on the side of the boat, although it is not easy to avoid doing so. He faces forward, raises the pole carefully, and replacing it without a splash or a blow on the crackling stems or leaves of the lilies, uses his body as a fulcrum as often as he wishes to alter the direction of the boat. He works his way against the wind as much as possible, and, casting his eyes in every direction, is always on the alert. Suddenly, with a roar like distant thunder, a wood-duck, generally the male, starts from the weeds, and with a curious cry, like that of a wailing infant, makes the best of his way from the approaching danger; instantly the sportsman drops the pole, wherever it may be—in mid air or deep in the mud, just planted or at its full reach—and springing to his gun, raises it with rapidity but deliberation, and, if the bird has not already gained a safe distance, discharges it with the best effect he is able to command. Frequently, at the report, another bird will start, and offer a fair and generally successful shot.

To one accustomed to kill quail, this shooting,

after the awkwardness arising from the motion of the boat is overcome, is not difficult; but the knack of dropping the pole at once is almost unattainable. Most persons, at first, frantically endeavor to deposit the pole in the boat, and cannot drop it instantly; others give it an energetic push. The former allow the birds time to escape, while the latter increase the unsteadiness of the boat.

The birds usually rise well, attaining the height of twenty feet before they move directly away, and hence present a good shot. If they are missed, they may be marked down, pursued, and started again; and as they are frequently very numerous, and rise at unexpected moments, they keep the sportsman excited, until, worn out with the excessive and unaccustomed labor, he has to stop and rest. If the water is low the poling is hard work, and at the most favorable times will be found sufficiently exhausting. The birds principally frequent the lily beds, which stretch out in broad patches where the water is moderately deep; but they are also found in open spots among the high reeds, and occasionally among the deer-tongue.

There are several kinds of weeds growing in the shallows of the bay, and restricted in their extent by its depth. The reeds, which in the fall resemble a ripe field of grain, have crimson stems, and narrow yellow leaves, almost inclosing the stems at their base and streaming gracefully in the wind at the top; they thrive in shallow water, and, attaining a height of twelve feet, form the hiding-places

of the sportsman. The wild rice has a greenish-yellow stem, with longer joints and without leaves; it branches at the end into the seed-receptacles, and is not found in such large patches. The deer-tongue grows in deeper water, and retains its green hue till the weather intimates that winter is present. It has a leaf like a dull spear-head, that projects but a few inches above the surface; and its stout stems, springing up close together, constitute a serious obstacle to the advancing boat. There are also scattered patches of weeds, usually called grass because they are green, but with a round, hollow, tapering stem, or leaf, that has no resemblance whatever to grass.

Early in the season, when there are few birds flying over the points, and the young, tender, and gentle wood-ducks crowd the marshes and will permit an easy approach, it is customary to employ a punter, who poles the boat while the sportsman sits on the forward thwart, gun in hand, ready in a moment to cut down the feeble birds. But if any of the shooting is to be done from the points, the punter will be found in the way, increasing the unsteadiness of the boat and augmenting the danger, already sufficiently great. Although by no means proficient, I always prefer poling myself, and will never permit any guns in the boat but my own.

On the day more particularly referred to in this chapter, we found the birds plentiful, although rather wild, and had grand sport, starting the crying wood-ducks and the quacking mallards from their

hiding-places, and killing a goodly number in spite of their sharp ears and strong wings.

Of the particular shots, the numerous misses, the various mishaps, it were vain to tell. A baptism in the shallow bay-water is regarded as a necessary initiation, and not being dangerous, the ceremony is frequently repeated. Good shots are rarer than bad ones, even with the best marksmen, and perhaps the author would have to vindicate truth by telling some awkward blunders of his own, and thus forfeit the reader's respect for ever. It is sufficient for the reader to recall the best day's sport at ducks he ever had, to imagine his own shooting considerably improved, his strength and activity augmented, and his promptest deliberation surpassed; and he will have a faint idea of our performance. It is enough to say the birds were there, and we were there.

Towards night we occupied a series of points above the Gap, as it is called—an opening between the island where the house is situated and the land beyond—and waited for the evening flight. The wind had died away, and as the sun was setting, the mallards came in from the lake to pass the night. Innumerable flocks, one after another, appeared from behind the trees, and passing overhead, settled down into the reeds. By twos, threes, or hundreds in a flock, in straight, even lines of battle, or bent like the two sides of a triangle, or in long single file, their wings whistling in the still air, or producing reports like pop-guns as they flirted or touched one another —immense numbers moved over us.

Having ascertained by several ineffectual shots that they were far out of range, we watched them with delight and curiosity, wondering whence they could all come, and whither they were going. There was no abatement or pause till the increasing darkness shut them out from our sight. Had we been prepared with Ely's wire cartridge we could have rained destruction among them, but as it was we only killed a few chance birds; and then reassembling our party where the open lead joined the bay, we returned to the club-house together.

The next day being clear and still, it was devoted to fishing and exploring. A Kentuckian who was among our numbers, having no fishing in his own State, and knowing nothing of salmon or striped-bass, and little of trout, was devoted to black-bass fishing. Persuading the writer to go in the boat with him, while two friends accompanied us in another, we crossed the bay, and having fastened large Buel's spoons to the end of stout hand-lines, proceeded to troll in the most primitive manner.

The bass were plentiful, and rushing from their lairs in the weeds close to the shore, darted out after the boat had passed, and devoured our baits. Although quite large, they gave feeble play, turning over and over in the water, and rarely jumping with the vigor of fish brought up in cooler latitudes; in fact, the river and lake bass differ so greatly as to seem almost to belong to different species. The river fish, which lie in the discolored water where long weeds grow from a bottom of deep mud, are yellow

in color, have a large head, and a yellow iris to the eye. The lake fish, which prefer the clearer element near rocky shoals, have a small head and reddish eye, are dark-sided and vigorous, have a large forked tail, and are infinitely preferable on the table.

One of our friends in the other boat was a practical joker, and of a lively turn of mind. He at first amused himself by jerking the line of his companion who sat nearer the bow, to induce him to think it was a bite; then he landed all the fish that were taken on either hook; and finally, having accidentally caught his hook into his companion's and drawn it in without the latter's knowledge, he hung it on the gunwale and had the fishing to himself. As the portion of the line, or bight as sailors call it, which still towed overboard kept up the ordinary strain, his associate was in great wonderment at his bad luck, and did not discover the reason till the fishing was over.

Having absolutely filled our boats with bass that weighed from two to four pounds, and having ordered a good dinner at the club-house to entertain some strangers, we returned, rather disgusted with such tame sport.

We caught, besides the bass, a few pickerel and a small pike-perch, *lucioperca Americana;* and found the most successful bait was a red and tin spoon, with a white feather on the hook. The natives call the pickerel a grass-pike, and the pike-perch a pickerel. Those curious nondescripts—half fish, half reptile—bill or gar-fish, *lepidosteus*, relics of an-

tediluvian ages, were seen in the water, but are only taken in the net.

The weather had been clear, mild, and still; it continued so for several days, and as storm and wind are necessary to duck-shooting, our sport, although pleasant, was greatly diminished. Consequently we rose at reasonable hours, ate comfortable breakfasts, and smoked our pipes before we left the house. One morning, as I was about departing, the Kentucky fisherman, who had found the weather admirable for his sport, offered to bet ten of the largest fish he would catch against the largest bird I should shoot, that I would not kill a dozen ducks. Of course I accepted the wager.

It was unpromising weather, still and warm, and there was absolutely no flight either during the morning or evening; but by chance two cormorants came close to my stand. Without waiting to distinguish what they were I fired, killing one dead, and dropping the other some distance off in the open water. My disgust on picking up the one nearest, and observing the thick legs, ugly shape, and crooked yellow bill, was only diminished by the recollection of my bet. I lost, failing in the end to bring home the dozen birds—although I shot more than that number, but was unable to recover several that fell in the weeds—and on my return, using that fact as an excuse, endeavored to beg off. The Kentuckian was delighted; imagining from my conversation that I had shot a canvas-back, and anticipating an amusing triumph, he insisted upon the letter of the law.

Our discussion, as was intended on my part, attracted the attention and interest of all the members, and my opponent waited with a victorious air till I should bring him my largest bird. At last, after much procrastination, it was produced amid such shouts as rarely rang through the old club-house. In vain did my Kentucky friend attempt to disclaim his acquisition or propose to waive his rights; "he would have the bird, and he must take him; it was a remarkably fine one of the kind, and a good specimen." At last he burst forth:

"Oh, get out with your cormorant; take him away; do, and I'll never make another bet with you as long as I live."

To this day, in that section of the West, a man who is too exacting occasionally wins a cormorant.

The time that circumstances permitted me to devote to pleasure was drawing to a close, and the last morning that was to be appropriated to the ducks had arrived, when, as I was about loading my boat, Henry stood before me, and with great earnestness remarked:

"I am going to shoot with you to-day, sir."

If he had said, "I am going to shoot you," he could not have spoken with more firmness and solemnity; or, if he had anticipated the most violent contradiction, he could not have assumed a more convincing manner. The proposal, as it suggested an augmented bag for my last day, was, however, cordially welcome; and, as soon as he was ready, I inquired in an unconcerned manner:

"Well, which way shall we go?"

The effrontery of the question fairly took him aback, and, pausing in apparent irresolution as to whether he was not in danger of being caught at last, he seemed for a moment half inclined to run for it. Incoherently he commenced his usual response about not giving advice; paused, and then, in a sadly reproachful tone, remonstrated as follows:

"You know if I were to give advice to gentlemen, and they were to have bad luck, they would blame me; and how can I know all the time where the ducks are flying?"

"But, Henry, as we are going together, I must certainly be told where the place is to be."

This appeared to surprise him; for, after a moment's deliberation, he jumped into his boat, and, seizing his paddle, said, "I am going to Grassy Point," and made off as fast as he could.

"Well, Henry, I suppose I shall have to go with you, instead of you with me; but the difference is not very great."

He seemed confused, and in doubt whether he had not compromised himself, and paddled with such speed that I could scarcely keep up with him. Seated with his face towards the bow of the boat, his guns lying ready for instant use in front of him, he plied his double paddle—that is to say, a long paddle with a blade at both ends, which are dipped alternately—with a vigor that would have distanced, for a short stretch, the most expert rower. Like

the other natives, he preferred the double paddle to the oars. While using it he could make an accurate course—an important consideration in the intricate channels; could watch for a chance shot ahead of him, or chase a wounded duck advantageously; at a moderate speed, could travel a long journey; and, for a spurt, could surpass the same boat propelled by oars; and was not annoyed by catching the blades in the innumerable weeds. So great was the respect that I acquired for the double paddle, from his manner of wielding it, that I thereupon resolved to have one and learn to use it, even if I did suffer somewhat in the attempt.

We proceeded in unbroken silence, and, reaching the point, located ourselves well upon it, not far apart, and awaited the ducks. Henry was an excellent shot, and set me an example that I did my best to follow; but as the birds did not fly well, we left at the expiration of a couple of hours, and crossed Mud Creek into the main swamp, called Lattimer Marsh. On the way, happening to pass an old muskrat house, my curiosity was excited, and I inquired:

"Are there any animals in that house now?"

"I don't know whether there are any animals, sir; there might be some sort of animals, but there are not any rats."

"Where are the rats, then?"

"They all disappear in summer; they leave their houses, and in the fall build new ones. I can't tell what becomes of them; but they have queer ways.

They build a big house—a sort of family house, as I call it—where a number of them dwell; and around it, about fifty rods off, smaller ones, where each rat appears to feed or go when he wants to be alone. There are generally two entrances, one above and the other under water, so that when the bay is frozen over they can get in."

"How do you catch them?"

"We set spring-traps of iron, but without teeth, so as not to hurt the skin, near their houses, and where we think they will be apt to step into them. The time to catch them is from the 1st of March till the 10th of April."

"Can anybody trap them?"

"Oh no, sir; that wouldn't do at all; a person has to own the land, or have the right to trap. The land isn't worth much, though—only about a dollar an acre."

"The Indian name of muskrat is said to be musksquash?"

"I don't know how that is; but I have heard people call them so. There are a good many in the marsh, and we sometimes make three or four hundred dollars a year from them."

"But, as the swamp fills up and the land makes, won't they disappear?"

"No, sir; the swamp isn't filling up; but the land is sinking, or the water rising—either one or the other; for the swamp is growing larger. The trees on the island are being killed by the water—some are dead already; and every year more high

land becomes meadow, and the meadow turns into swamp."

"I thought the Western lakes were growing shallow, and receding yearly."

"Not here, sir. Why, that long spit of reeds beyond Grassy Point was dry land once, so that you could drive a team clear over to Squaw Island; there were large trees on it, but they are all dead, and the channel between it and the island is six feet deep."

"All the better for us sportsmen. Have you any other valuable animals besides the rats?"

"A few otter; but not many. No, sir; the ducks are the most valuable things we have."

"They will soon be killed off."

"No, sir; as there is no shooting allowed in the spring they are becoming more plentiful. They are tamer, too; and some stay here all summer and breed. It was the spring shooting, when they were poor and thin, that killed them off or drove them away."

"How many birds can a good shot average daily the season through?"

"I think I can kill forty a day, but perhaps there are some men who can shoot better. But now, sir, if you will choose your stand, I will go a little way below."

I ensconced myself in a bunch of high weeds surrounded by a pond of open water, and killed a few mallards. The birds did not fly well, however, and we moved from place to place in the hope of better

luck, and with a restlessness that showed increasing dissatisfaction on the part of Henry; so that I was not surprised when, early in the afternoon, he told me that he must return to the club-house. I remained for some hours where he left me; but hearing rapid shooting near the Gap, I poled my way there through a broad field of lilies, known as the Pond Lily Channel, and there, to my surprise, found Henry.

Whether it was the desire to be alone, for his peculiarity of preferring to shoot by himself has been mentioned, or whether he was tempted by a favorable flight of birds, I never knew; when I appeared, he paddled hastily away as though ashamed, and made no answer to my inquiries as to what detained him, or how they could manage without him at the house. Unceremoniously occupying his place, I completed the evening, and the allotted hours of my stay, with some excellent shooting at flocks of mallards, widgeons, and blue-bills, that poured through the Gap in endless flights, till after dark.

Then, for the last time, I rowed through the darkness towards the well-known point; for the last time sat down at the groaning board which our kind-hearted landlady had furnished so liberally; played my last game with the euchre-loving son of Kentucky; smoked a farewell pipe of Killikinnick in the sociable circle around the air-tight; slept for the last time in the comfortable bed under the hospitable roof of the club-house; and next morning, having seen my associates depart, each in his little boat, and

bid them all farewell, I set out, with my birds packed in ice, for the City of New York. My friends welcomed me and my birds gladly. Reader, had you been my friend, you would also have welcomed us both.

CHAPTER X.

SUGGESTIONS TO SPORTSMEN.

The word "sport" has been more abused, ill-treated, and misapplied than any other in our language; of a high, pure, and noble signification, it has been debased to unworthy objects; of a restricted and refined significance, it has been extended to a mass of improper matters; from its natural elegant appropriateness, it has been degraded to vulgar and dishonest associations.

The miserable wretch who lives on the most contemptible passion in human nature, and with practised skill cheats those who would cheat him—winning by the unfair rules of games, so-called, of chance—or, with less conscience, converting that chance into a certainty, calls himself a sporting man. The individual who, having trained a horse up to the finest condition of activity and endurance, drives or rides him under lash and spur round a course to win a sum of money, although he may call himself a sportsman, is really a business man. The daring backwoodsman of the Far West, who follows the fleet elk or timid deer, and who attacks the formidable buffalo or grizzly bear, is less a sportsman than a mighty hunter; the man who shoots with a view of selling his game is a market-gunner; and he who kills that he may eat is a pot-hunter.

The sportsman pursues his game for pleasure; he does not aspire to follow the grander animals of the chase, makes no profit of his success, giving to his friends more than he retains, shoots invariably upon the wing, and never takes a mean advantage of bird or man. It is his pride to kill what he does kill elegantly, scientifically, and mercifully. Quantity is not his ambition; he never slays more than he can use; he never inflicts an unnecessary pang or fires an unfair shot.

The man who, happening to find birds plentiful in warm weather, and, after murdering all that he can, leaves them to spoil, is no more a sportsman than he who fires into a huddled bevy of quail, or who considers every bird as representing so much money value, and to be converted into it as soon as possible.

The sportsman is generous to his associate, not seeking to obtain the most shots, but giving away the advantage in that particular, and recovering it if possible by superiority of aim; for although to be a sportsman a person must naturally be an enthusiast, he should never forget what he owes to his friend, and above all what he owes to himself.

Boys and Germans need not imagine that killing robins or blackbirds on trees, no matter how numerously, is sport. Robins and blackbirds, the latter especially, if the old song is to be believed, make dainty pies, but do not constitute an object of pursuit to the sportsman. Diminutive birds shot sitting are as far beneath sport as gigantic wild animals shot standing or running are above it. The

only objects of the sportsman's pursuit are the game birds; not in the confined sense used in old times by the English, when the very prince of all—the woodcock—was excluded from the list, but embracing every bird, fit for the table, that is habitually shot on the wing. Many of these, perhaps the finest, gamest, and bravest, are shot over dogs, where the wonderful instinct of the animal aids the intelligence of the human; but whether followed by the faithful setter, or lured to bobbing decoy; killed from points where, prone in the reeds, the eager sportsman, insensible to cold or wet, at the grey of dawn or dusk of night, awaits his prey; or from the convenient blind which the deluded birds approach without suspicion, or pursued with horse and wagon on the open plain—these all are game birds, and he who follows them legitimately is a sportsman.

Wild birds, like the tame ones, are given for man's use, and the best use that can be made of them is the one that will confer most health, nourishment, and happiness on mankind. Fanatics imagine that although birds may be killed, it must be done only to furnish food; as if there was nothing beyond eating in this world, and as if contribution to health were not as essential as supplies to the stomach. The two may and should be combined; a man who is hungry may kill that he may be satisfied, the man who is sickly may kill that he may recover—neither may kill in excess; and a third may kill lest he become sick, provided nothing is injured that is not used.

Death before the muzzle of a gun, in the hands of an experienced marksman, when the body of the charge striking the object terminates life instantly—and even when, in the hands of a bungler, the wounded bird is not put out of his pain till he is retrieved—is far more merciful than after capture in a trap, accompanied with agonies of apprehension and perhaps days of starvation, till the thoughtless boy shall remember his snare and awkwardly end life. The birds of the air and beasts of the field are given for man's use and advantage, whether domesticated, or wild as they once all were; and if they serve to supply him with food or healthful exercise, and especially if they do both, they have answered their purpose. It is certainly no more brutalizing to shoot them on the wing or in the open field, when they have a reasonable chance to escape, than to wring their necks in the barn-yard, or knock them on the head with an axe.

To become a sportsman, the first thing to acquire—provided nature has kindly furnished the proper groundwork of heart and body, without which little can be done—is the art of shooting. A few, very few men become, through fortuitous circumstances of nature and practice, splendid shots; many shoot well, and some cannot shoot at all. The author of this work has handled a gun from his twelfth year, and been out with thousands of sportsmen, but he never yet saw a dead shot—one who can kill every time.

Crack shots, however, are numerous; and include,

according to Frank Forester, those who, in covert and out of covert, the season through, will kill three out of five of the birds that rise fairly within range; but in the opinion of the author, the application should be extended to any man who can kill two out of five on an average. This calculation, however, has no reference to fair shots; every bird that rises within twenty-five yards and is seen, though it be but for an instant, and many that rise at thirty-five yards, are to be counted.

In our country there is so much covert, that the man who picks his birds and only fires at open chances, is a potterer, unworthy even of the common-place name of gunner; he has nothing of the sportsman and little of the man about him. Afraid to miss, anxious to boast of his skill, desirous of surpassing his friends, he unites the qualities of braggart and sneak.

Be liberal in your shots; do not grudge ammunition, nor dread the disgrace of a miss—the disgrace of eluding the trial is far greater; and no man who waits for open shots, and acquires a hesitating manner, will ever effect anything brilliant. If you miss, there are always plenty of excellent excuses at hand—your foot slipped, the bird dodged, a tree intervened; or, you hit him hard, cut out his feathers, or even killed him stone dead, but he did not fall at once. If you doubt the validity of these excuses, go out with the best shot you know, and observe whether he does not furnish you with ten times the number in a week.

Now, the author cannot shoot, and never could; but he manages to bring home as many quail, wood cock, snipe, rail, ruffed grouse, and ducks, on the average, as any of his friends. He observes that most of them miss as often as he does, with no better excuses, and some far oftener; but still he never, to the best of his belief, saw the season during which he killed—that is, bagged—one-half of the birds he shot at. Some professionals, of course, shoot at one kind of game wonderfully; the gunners of Long Island Bay are astoundingly accurate on wild-fowl, but would not kill one quail in a week; while some men who could scarcely touch a duck, handle their guns splendidly in the thickest cover. Professionals, however, usually yield the best chances to their employers, and may be more skilful than they seem; but among amateurs the author claims a rank that will at least entitle him to judge of others.

The majority of persons rarely consider how many birds escape, without the fault of the marksman; at over thirty yards the best gun, especially when a little dirty, will leave openings in the charge where a bird may be hit with only one shot, if at all. Ducks, the larger bay-snipe, ruffed grouse, and, above all, quail late in the season, will carry off several shots—flying away apparently unhurt, although in the end they may fall dead. If the gun was held perfectly straight this would happen less frequently; but to so hold it is almost impossible, for no living man could kill, once in a dozen times, a flying bird with a single ball; and even then the probabi-

lities are, that a yellow-leg snipe shot at more than thirty-five yards off, would once in five times carry away the few pellets that may strike him; and at forty yards escape entirely untouched. If the reader will select the best target his gun can make with an ounce of No. 8 shot at forty yards, and see how many spaces there are entirely vacant large enough to contain a snipe, he will be convinced that the above statement is correct; and at fifty yards, the chances are three to one against the marksman. Sir Francis Francis, who is a good authority in England, says, that to kill one bird in two shots is good shooting; and there the grounds are almost always open, while the reverse is the case with us.

Do not be discouraged, therefore, if the sun gets in your eyes, your foot slips, the bird dodges, a few floating feathers are the only result of your effort, or you make a clean miss; others do the same. Neither lose your temper nor curse your luck, as by so doing you may excite your nerves and injure your shooting, and cannot improve it. Be cool, never shoot without an attempt at aim, if it is only where the bird disappeared; take your disappointments pleasantly, strive to do your best, and you will improve.

Many ducks fly at least ninety miles an hour; that is, twenty-six hundred yards a minute, or forty-four yards a second; if, therefore, a duck starts at your feet with that velocity, and you require a second to cover him, he will be out of range; or if he is flying across, and you dwell one forty-fourth

part of a second on your aim, you will miss him. A quail, late in the season, flies as fast as this, and rises with a rapidity equal to his flight. He is often found in coverts, dodges and twists with remarkable skill and judgment, frequently flies off in a direct line behind the thickest bush, and requires the perfection of training to bring down with certainty. These are difficulties that patience alone can overcome; for if shooting were simple, there would be no art or pleasure in it.

All books on sporting tell you to fire ahead of cross shots, and in this they are right; but the reason they give is, that time is necessary for the shot to reach the object—in this they are wrong; shot moves infinitely faster than the bird, and for practical purposes, reaches its mark instantaneously. Human nerves and muscles, however, are imperfect, and it requires an instant, an important one, to discharge the gun after the aim is taken. The result, therefore, is the same, and you must endeavor to shoot ahead of the bird; and if he is flying fast, far ahead of him. If the motion of the object is followed and the gun kept moving before the discharge, some writers allege no allowance need be made, but it is so difficult not to pause slightly, that it is better in all cases to allow some inches.

To follow the motion of a very fast-flying bird, is almost, if not quite impossible, and the attempt to do so at all, is apt to create a popping habit. When a broad-bill, driving before a strong northwester, darts past, the best plan is to try and fire many feet,

even ten or fifteen, ahead of him; and then you will rarely succeed in discharging your piece before he is abreast of the muzzle, and frequently will lag behind him. The aim must be taken on the line of flight, and a little attention will convince you that the bird is up with the sight ere the trigger is fairly pulled. A knowledge of this principle, and an ability to practise it, may be said to be the art of duck-shooting; as in that there are a vast majority of cross shots, and the birds fly rapidly.

There is an erroneous idea that the eye must be lowered close down to the breech, in order to have a correct aim; but, while it is apparent if the neck is not bent at all there can be no aim, a slight inaccuracy will not only make no difference, but will give an advantage by throwing the shot high. It will be perceived, on fastening the gun in an immovable position, that the eye may be moved from near one hammer to the other, and the aim altered but a few inches, on an object thirty yards distant—an inaccuracy, considering the spread of shot, which is utterly unimportant.

So also, although by the attraction of gravitation the charge falls somewhat, the deflection is too inconsiderable to merit attention.

After watching himself carefully, reading what the best authors have written, and comparing experiences with his friends, the author has concluded that experienced sportsmen miss from hesitation in pulling the trigger, dwelling on the aim, and nervously shrinking from the recoil. The first fault

arises from some temporary or permanent condition of mind or body, the second from anxiety to make assurance doubly sure, and the last from habit.

If a man is naturally slow he can never shoot fast-flying birds, but if his fingers are stiff from cold he can warm them. A resolution to fire boldly, and not to dread missing, will cure the over-anxiety that destroys its own intent, but to meet the recoil without giving to it, or pushing against it, which is the more common mistake, is often extremely difficult. This unfortunate habit, occurring at the moment of highest excitement amid the noise and smoke, is rarely noticed by the guilty party, and some will at first stoutly deny its existence.

To mind the recoil of a gun seems pusillanimous, and few can believe, till assured by actual experiment, that it equals sixty or seventy pounds, and will crush the bones of the body if immovably fixed. Let the reader observe the next time that his gun is unwittingly left at half-cock, how far he will pull it out of aim, and how he will push against it, when attempting to discharge it at game. An acquaintance of the writer, who would scout the idea of being affected by the recoil of his gun, and indeed would have sworn "it did not kick a bit," was once chasing a diver on a placid, sluggish stream, in a dug-out. When the bird rose close to the boat, the sportsman was standing erect, poising himself with care in the unsteady craft, but as he pulled the trigger he instinctively pushed so hard, that, as the cap snapped,

he lost his balance, upset the canoe, and pitched forward head-foremost overboard!

Probably one half of the fair shots that are missed escape on account of this unfortunate nervousness; and it is a habit that can only be cured by incessant care and unrelaxed watchfulness. Anything that affects the nerves, as smoking or drinking, increases the difficulty, and the sudden flushing of a bird will cause it. Unhappily it is apt to be most prevalent when the shooting is good and the sportsman excited, thus ruining many of his best days. With heavy loads, or what is known as a kicking gun, the error will be aggravated; and most persons have no idea of the proper proportions of powder and shot, putting in immense quantities of the latter and sparing the former.

The true load for a gun not exceeding eight pounds in weight, regardless of its size or bore, is one ounce and a quarter of shot and three drachms of the strongest powder, or three and a half drachms of common powder. The same proportion should be retained if the gun is heavier or the charge increased. Where more shot is used power is lost and recoil aggravated; and if the powder is not augmented one ounce of shot will do better execution than two.

Many persons who have ascertained this fact and practise upon it, will inform you that they drive their shot through the birds, and consequently kill them instantly. This is a mistake; small shot are rarely, if ever, driven through a bird; but where

the force is increased the blow is much harder, and stuns. It is the velocity rather than the size or number of the shot that tells. A soldier in battle was struck on the belt-plate by a spent minié bullet not a half inch in diameter, and he described himself as feeling that he had been torn to pieces, and that a cannon-ball had gone directly through his body.

The size of the shot is to be proportioned to the size of the bird—weight, of course, being an element of power and telling on each individual pellet—but the more the aggregate amount can be reduced the less the recoil. Six drachms of powder and one ounce of shot, will not occasion as much recoil as three drachms of powder and an ounce and a half of shot.

The gun should always be held firmly to the shoulder, and the shoulder never rested against a solid substance; indeed, the collar-bone may be broken by simply firing directly upwards. Therefore, never fire in the air while lying on your back upon the ground, and be careful when shooting at ducks from a boat not to support yourself upon the latter.

If the reader still doubts the universally disastrous effects of cringing at the moment of discharge, let him have an assistant to load the gun out of sight, who without his knowledge shall vary the load, and occasionally put in none at all. Then let the reader fire at a mark, and in spite of the efforts which he will naturally make, he will find when

there is no load, and consequently nothing to distract his attention, that he does shrink, and pull the muzzle somewhat off the object.

This book is not written for beginners; there are plenty of works with every variety of instruction in them, and the reader is supposed to have read them, digested their contents, acquired a knowledge of the gun, and some skill in its use, and to have been frequently in the field, but to be perfect neither in the use of the gun, nor the practice of the sportsman's art. There are, however, a few simple suggestions that may prove valuable, not only in acquiring the ability to shoot, but in restoring it where, from want of practice, it has diminished.

The sportsman must be as quick and ready in handling his gun as the juggler in handling his tools; he must be able to bring it to his shoulder and point the muzzle at a stationary mark simultaneously, to aim in every direction with equal facility, and to follow a moving object accurately. This is merely mechanical, and is acquired, like every other mechanical art, by dint of practice.

Some writers recommend firing at turnips tossed through the air by an assistant, and this is well; but an equally advantageous plan is to throw a soft ball about a room and take aim at it, pulling the trigger every time, with an unloaded and uncocked gun. The sole, but important, recommendation of this idea is, that it may be carried out anywhere and at all seasons, and if the reader will try it daily

for a week before going into the field, he will perceive the effects.

So also, to acquire quickness: if the reader will throw two small objects—pennies, or the like—into the air, and endeavor to aim at or hit them both before they reach the ground, he will in a short time obtain such facility that he will be able to lay down his gun, and after throwing the pennies, to pick it up and hit them both twice out of three times.

To shoot at pigeons from a trap, robins from trees, and even swallows on the wing, although the practice differs greatly from shooting at game, is useful to a certain extent; but steady and long-continued practice of this nature is injurious rather than beneficial. It is somewhat notorious that the celebrated pigeon-shots are generally poor marksmen in the field, and entirely at a loss in thick covert.

After all, however, the best place to learn the use of the gun, while it is by all odds the pleasantest, is in the field; where, amid the thousand beauties of nature, and under the excitement of the presence of game, the sportsman by slow degrees overcomes the innumerable difficulties that surround the art of shooting flying.

Closely allied to skill in killing the right object is the ability to avoid killing the wrong one. A gun is extremely dangerous—how much so is known only to those who have handled it long; in spite of the best care it will occasionally go off at unexpected times, and in careless hands is sure, sooner or later,

to do terrible damage. Every possible precaution must be taken, vigilance must never be relaxed, the muzzle must under no circumstances point towards the owner or his companions; if two men are crawling through thick brush, the gun of the first must point forwards, and of the last, backwards; the caps should always be removed when the sportsman gets into a wagon, and when the loaded weapon is left in a house the hammers ought never to be left down on the caps; but, above all, no man who is not in search of an early grave should pull a gun towards him by the barrels.

These rules are simple, and the reasons for them apparent; if the hammer is on the cap, a blow on it, or its catching on a twig, will discharge the load; if a horse runs away, as horses have an unpleasant habit of doing, even if the lock is at half-cock, the tumbler may be broken down; if a gun is capped in a house, every one but an idiot knows it is loaded; and if it is drawn towards a person—as will be often done by thoughtless people in taking it from a wagon or lifting it from a boat or from the ground—it is almost sure to go off.

In the field it should be carried either at whole or half-cock; authorities differ as to which of these two modes is the safer. If the hammer is at full cock, a touch on the trigger will set it loose; if it is at half-cock, in the excitement of cocking it when a bird rises unexpectedly, it will often slip unintentionally. I prefer the former method, believing that the sense of danger makes the person more

careful, and that the risk of a twig's touching the trigger in spite of the trigger-guard is very slight, while the weapon is ready for instant use, and only has to be pointed at the object and discharged. Moreover, I have twice seen a gun that was at half-cock discharged when the sportsman was in the act of cocking it hastily, and twice when putting it back to half-cock; but the piece should never for a moment be trusted out of the sportsman's hands without his first putting it at half-cock; nor should he ever cross a fence without the same precaution. In changing from whole to half-cock, pass the hammer below the first notch, so as to hear a distinct click when it is drawn back.

Countrymen when about to walk a log over a rapid stream, will usually carefully put the hammers down on the caps, and placing the butt on the log, steady themselves by it, thus insuring their destruction if they should happen to slip; and if they stand on a fence they do the same thing, and rest the stock on the upper rail. Not only should such follies be avoided, but the gun should never be leaned against a tree, as thoughtless people are apt to do when they stop at a spring to drink, and never placed where it can slip or roll.

When you have fired and desire to reload, put the hammer of the loaded barrel at half-cock, and if the right barrel has been discharged, set down the butt so that the hammers are towards you, and the contrary way if the left barrel is to be loaded; in this manner you will avoid bringing your hand over the

loaded barrel, and in case the other charge should go off you would lose the end of your thumb, perhaps, but save most of your fingers.

From the foregoing rules, which apply mainly to muzzle-loaders, it will be seen how much safer are breech-loaders; with them the entire charge can be withdrawn on entering a house or getting into a wagon, and there is absolutely no danger to fingers or thumb in the process of loading. And in carrying the weapon on long tramps in the woods, where it is frequently removed from boat to shoulder, from shoulder to boat, and from wagon to case, and when it has to be ready at any instant, with the muzzle-loader the only possible precaution is to leave the nipples without caps, which are to be carried in the vest pocket, and must be removed after every vain alarm; while with the breech-loader, the charge itself is not inserted till needed.

With these few suggestions, which are applicable not merely to the kinds of sport treated of in this volume, but to every species of shooting, we leave the young sportsman to his own resources and to the knowledge that he will acquire in the field, hoping that he may find something in them that will aid him to kill reasonably often the game he points at, and to avoid the dreadful misfortune of injuring a friend or companion.

CHAPTER XI.

TRAP-SHOOTING.

THE amusement of trap-shooting is pursued in the Northern States, on the margins of the western lakes—as some eminent marksmen of Buffalo and Niagara Falls can testify—and on the sea-coast—as some famous matches at Islip would prove. It is not a field sport; it is hardly a sport at all; and a pigeon is not, properly speaking, a game-bird, in spite of the instances quoted. If this work were to be confined strictly to its professed objects, this chapter would have to be excluded; but for the reason that it belongs nowhere else, that an account of this peculiar style of shooting will be useful to many sportsmen, and that no published book contains any information on the subject, the writer has presumed to collate the experience of his friends rather than of himself—for he does not pretend to much skill in this particular art—and to offer it to the sporting public.

Trap-shooting, although quite an ungrammatical expression, is perfectly understood as a sporting term, having acquired a conventional meaning; it signifies neither shooting at a trap, which its construction implies, nor shooting out of a trap, but shooting at a bird—generally a pigeon—released from a trap. Although not a highly scientific sport, and somewhat open to the charge of cruelty, it has its devotees; and certainly, amid a crowd of spectators

and competitors, to take the palm and carry off the prize is no mean glory. The birds probably suffer as little, cut down with the whistling charge of fine shot while on the wing, and with a chance for life, as though their necks were remorselessly wrung by the poulterer; and in either case they find their way to market and furnish food for the people.

The most serious objection to this sport is, that the wild pigeons have to be taken from their nests in the spring, and thus, either prevented laying their eggs, or hatching their broods. As the preservation and increase of all species of wild birds, animals, and fishes, and the prevention of their destruction at unseasonable times, are the first duties of a sportsman, the killing of pigeons ere they have raised their broods is on a par with shooting ducks and snipe in spring, and is excusable only because the feeling of the people does not require the enactment of thoroughly appropriate laws; and while it prevents the protection of the latter, makes the preservation of the former—which is a comparatively valueless bird—scarcely worth the trouble.

Under these circumstances, and in order to fill up a season of the year when there is no other legitimate sporting excitement, trap-shooting has grown in public estimation, and being adopted by a large class of sportsmen, has led to the employment of a numerous body of followers, skilled in the secrets of trapping and preparing birds so that they may be presented to the shooter in the best possible condition.

This class of underlings, who attend to the many

wants of the sportsman, whether in the field or at the trap; who break his dogs, carry his bag, or tend his birds; with their quaint wisdom and innate honesty, —deserve more consideration than they receive: but above all, in trap-shooting, are they a necessity, and is their uprightness above price? An unfair trapper may give one man strong birds, and another weak; may pull their wing-feathers, or keep some without water or food, and thus almost decide a contest beforehand.

Their labor is excessive; they have first to catch the birds, and attend to their arrival at the place of shooting early enough to meet the sportsmen; and then they have to run eighteen or twenty-one yards over the uneven and often muddy ground for every bird they place in the trap. Hence, in selecting a place to shoot pigeons, it is desirable, by avoiding sand or soft earth, to save the trapper; under the most favorable circumstance, he will soon be exhausted, and with every advantage, cannot trap more than five hundred birds in a day. Two birds are released, either together or successively, ere the traps are replenished; the trapper, carrying two birds, runs to the traps, sets one after the other, and returns also on the run—for the marksman by this time is at the score—and selects two more birds from the box; this labor, continued during the noon-tide hours of a blazing day, is not over-remunerated by liberal pay and the surplus birds, that, unless claimed by the shooter, fall by common consent to the share of his hard-working assistant.

The most rapid way is to use five traps, in single-bird shooting, and employ five boys—with a relay of five others when the first are exhausted—to set them; boys are naturally more active than men, and are buoyed up by an excitement that the latter do not feel. The five birds are shot at before the traps are refilled; and by the time the last bird is released the boys stand armed with a fresh one apiece, ready to reset the traps in a moment. In this mode, with good luck in not having too many birds that have to be retrieved, and with regularity, fifteen hundred birds may be shot at in ten hours.

The difficulty of obtaining pigeons in our seaboard cities has been so great of late years, as advancing civilization has reduced the number, and driven westward the migratory hosts which once visited the Eastern States, that not only has the expense enormously increased, but the practice of trap-shooting has diminished. The ordinary price along the Atlantic coast is from twenty to thirty dollars a hundred, and the supply is so small, that the collection of any considerable number, even at that rate, is extremely difficult.

As skill in the act of shooting birds released from a trap, where the sportsman stands prepared, gun in hand and nerves disturbed, if at all, only by the presence of spectators, does not imply ability to acquit oneself well in the field, and tends but little to that end; so it is pursued not for improvement so much as for temporary excitement during the dull months of the year. Pigeons nest in June, a season

during which there is absolutely no legitimate sport with the gun whatever; the woodcock are not yet grown, the snipe have passed to their northern homes, and the sportsman fills the vacancy with the emulation of surpassing his associates at trap-shooting. The attempt is exciting, and the art peculiar, requiring great self-command and utter disregard of the jeers, praises, or contemptuous laughter of a thousand spectators.

Tame pigeons are not so well adapted to the purpose as their wild brethren, having a quiet way of ignoring the object for which they are produced, and walking towards the stand, or picking up scraps of food the moment they are released, that is trying to the expectant shooter. Then they are strong of wing and well feathered, so that the shot must be driven hard to penetrate to a vital spot; and they fly as often towards the crowd assembled behind the score as in the contrary direction. Their flight is uneven, and frequently, after rising a few feet, they will suddenly alight, or pitch down part of the way. The best shots, therefore, prefer the wild birds, that go off with a rush the moment the trap is pulled—for, although they fly faster, they are more certain in their motions. Tame birds are collected in the neighborhood of towns and through the country, but rarely in large numbers; and being accustomed to the presence of man, require little special care. Wild birds are brought from long distances, frequently from the confines of Wisconsin, and in consequence of their timid, excitable nature, re-

quire continued care. They are captured on their nests, where they congregate in millions; and being cooped in shallow boxes made of slats, only deep enough to allow them to move, but not to use their wings or bruise themselves, are transported as rapidly and tenderly as possible to their destination. They must invariably be accompanied by a careful person to wait on them, and supply food and water, of the latter of which they require large quantities, and they must be moved as rarely and carefully as possible.

The moment they arrive, they should be placed in a prepared room; and each one, as he is taken out, must have his head plunged in water, and be allowed to drink freely. The ceiling of their apartment should be low, or there will be difficulty in catching them, and the windows may be slatted; a sufficient number of perches to accommodate them readily should be set up, and they must be disturbed as little as possible. Food and water should be introduced three times a day, either very quietly, or after the apartment has been darkened by closing the shutters. In spite of the best of care, about ten per cent. will perish on the journey, or in consequence of it.

Having been retained in the room two or three days, they will be in their best condition, recovered from their exposure, and not yet injured by their confinement; and may then be caught, replaced in the boxes, and carried to the shooting-ground. It is a common practice to pull out some

of the smaller feathers under the tail, or to stick a pin in the gristle of the rump, with a view of making them fly better; as a bird that remains in the trap, when a ground-trap is used, after it is pulled, and refuses to rise, baulks the shooter, and any pain inflicted on them just as they are being used will make them wild and anxious to escape.

There are three kinds of traps used, called the ground, spring, and plunge traps; the former is so arranged that when the string is drawn, the trap, which is composed of tin plates, falls over and lies flat on the ground; while the others, through the instrumentality of a spring, or by a vigorous jerk on the line, throw the birds into the air. The ground-traps are considered by many the most scientific, leaving the shooter in doubt as to the direction of the bird's flight, and preventing his shooting on the calculation which can be made very accurately with a spring-trap—that the bird will invariably be thrown to a certain place, and may be killed there, nominally on the wing, but before he has really got under weigh; but in the West the plunge-traps are generally preferred, as they insure the bird's flying at once.

The traps are also spoken of as "H and T," or "head and tail" traps, and are usually marked with a large H or T; but this means merely that the shooter may select the trap to be pulled by the toss, in case the terms of the contest permit it. The sportsmanlike mode, however, as claimed by Eastern sportsmen, is to allow the trapper, provided he can

be perfectly relied upon, to pull any trap he may choose, without notice to the shooter.

Four or five traps are generally used, placed several feet apart, at twenty-one yards from the score in single-bird shooting, and at eighteen yards in double-bird shooting. In double-bird shooting the two birds are not placed in the same trap, but two traps are pulled at the same time. In single-bird shooting only one barrel can be discharged at one bird; and to save time, the shooter should fire at two birds, one after the other, before he leaves the score, being thus compelled to use both barrels of his gun.

A bird, to be credited as killed, must be retrieved within the bounds—that is to say, must be gathered with the hands alone; and it was formerly permitted to take him not only on the ground or in the air, but from a tree, and the shooter might walk round a running bird and drive him towards the trap; but more modern rules require that the bird shall fall, and shall be proceeded to straight from the score. The bounds are eighty yards radius from the centre of the traps in single-bird shooting, and one hundred yards in double-bird shooting. The distance should be measured with a rope, and marked by small flags or painted stakes set up in the ground.

The judges order the shooter to retrieve any bird they think proper; and in case there is doubt whether a bird was hit, although duly retrieved, they must examine and decide, being occasionally compelled to pick the feathers in order to ascertain.

In case of a missfire, according to the rules of the New York Club, if the cap explodes, the bird is counted against the shooter, although his gun may be properly loaded, he being responsible for the cleanliness of the gun; but in case the cap fails to explode, he is allowed another bird. Other clubs only require that the gun shall be properly loaded; and others score the bird as missed. If in double-bird shooting one bird only rises, it used to be counted to the shooter, and he was allowed another bird in place of the one that failed to fly, thus really shooting at two single birds. This was so manifestly unjust that the rule has been changed by the State Association, and the shooter is required to shoot at a fresh brace. The sportsman stands at the score and directs the trapper when to pull; he must hold the butt of his gun beneath his elbow, but usually drops his head, and bends his body into the position it would take were the gun at his shoulder, so that he merely has to raise his gun to his eye and point it. In double-trap shooting, undoubtedly, the marksman requires every advantage he can obtain, and then will have many birds pass beyond range ere he can fire; but where a single pigeon is presented, it would be advisable to require every contestant to hold his gun with the muzzle above his head. Professional shots usually extend the arms and assume an attitude, and gain an advantage that would be impossible to them in game-shooting.

The weight or character of gun and load of

powder have not heretofore been restricted, although it is unreasonable to match a light field-gun, loaded with three drachms, against a fourteen-pound ducking-gun, driving its charge of No. 10 shot with six drachms of powder. The load of shot should not be over one ounce and a quarter; but even with this restriction the heavy guns will have the advantage, being able to send fine shot stronger, and have the benefit of the extra quantity of pellets. The size of shot in light guns is generally No. 7, with three and a quarter drachms of powder. The guns are loaded in the presence of a judge selected for the purpose, and the shot is poured into a measured charger; but with breech-loaders, as the cartridges are already prepared, it is customary to select one of the latter at random and open it.

A good shot will frequently kill twenty single birds in succession, and some persons who have made this sport their specialty have been known to kill many more; but the majority of excellent sportsmen will not kill over nineteen out of twenty. The best field-shots are often bunglers at trap-shooting. Where double birds are shot at, it is rare that twenty are killed without a miss, and an excellent average out of ten double rises would be seventeen birds. The second bird is frequently so far off ere he is fired at, that, even if hit, he will go out of bounds and be recorded as missed, although he falls dead. In this shooting there is much in accident, not only as to the bird's falling out of bounds, but as to the mode of flight; for if both birds go directly

away from the stand, the chances are against the shooter, whereas if one approaches, the difficulty of killing is not much greater than with single birds.

In England a better rule in shooting single birds generally prevails, by which the rise is extended to twenty-five or thirty yards, but the shooter is allowed to use both barrels; thus occasionally making some brilliant shots at long distances, and proving the qualities, not merely of the sportsman, but of his weapon. Firing a single barrel at a pigeon within thirty yards, is dull sport; better marksmanship is required to stop him at from thirty-five to forty with the first barrel, even with the additional chance with the second at from forty to fifty.

No scattering gun, filling the air with its cloud of mustard-seed, will answer for this work; the closest and strongest-shooting gun will have to be held so true that the centre of the charge will hit the object, to obtain the least chance with the second barrel, or to insure certainty even with the first. Fewer birds that are fairly hit will go out of bounds, as the second barrel may complete the work of the first; and the best marksman will generally exhibit himself by the management of this barrel, to use which at all will require extreme rapidity and accuracy.

This fact has been recognised occasionally at conventions, or where the contests were for honor and not money, by increasing the distance at which ties are shot off. In a large match there are always several ties, which are shot off at five birds, and

frequently not finished till repeated several times. At the New York State Convention of 1865, held at Niagara Falls, the parties tying one another were set back five yards at every tie, and still at thirty-one yards four birds out of five were killed with a single barrel—although, of course, at this distance much will depend upon the direction and mode of flight. Success, even with the use of both barrels, will require far more brilliant shooting than in the present mode.

There has always been great dispute among trap-shooters as to the best trap. The New York City Club claims that a bird released from a ground-trap, selecting his own time to rise, and mode and direction of flight, is harder to kill than one tossed heels over head from a plunge or spring-trap. But our Western brethren, who are naturally more rapid, and who have less difficulty in obtaining pigeons, are so annoyed with the waste of time occasioned by a dilatory pigeon, that they universally prefer the plunge-trap.

Probably the mesne between these two opinions is correct, or more properly a combination of them both; a single bird is undoubtedly harder to kill at a ground-trap, whereas the plunge-trap will free the two birds in double-shooting, to go off at the same moment. So that for these reasons, and to insure skill at both, they should be appropriated to these offices respectively. The best Western shot, if not the best gentleman shot in the world, who has killed his eighty-four out of ninety double birds,

was terribly baulked by the ground trap, to which he had not been accustomed, when he first attempted to kill even single birds from it. But for double-shooting, as it is essential that both birds should fly together, the trap that insures this is preferable.

One of the worst features of trap-shooting is, that it has fallen mainly into the hands of professionals; and although there is no reason for not pursuing a legitimate sport because blacklegs enjoy it also, they have introduced tricks and artifices that degrade the entire amusement. The use of heavy guns is one of the mildest of these, for it is madness for the best shot in the world to match his ordinary field-gun against a number six bore single-barrelled piece; and they will put a clod of grass or even a dead bird in the same trap with the live one, and if this is a spring-trap, the adversary will be taken at a disadvantage. They deaden their own birds by squeezing them under the wings, and excite those of their opponent by plucking them or pulling their feathers, and can even give them an irregular flight. The professionals, therefore, may be expected to gain a nominal superiority, and claim to be champions, more from their cunning unscrupulousness than from their actual skill, and, by this fancied superiority, degrade the entire sport.

The rules which were adopted at a convention of the principal clubs in the State of New York, held in 1865, when the best sporting talent in the country was represented, are given in the Appendix. Although

an improvement in many particulars on the former rules, they are not perfect; it is probable that they will be further amended, so as, while increasing the difficulty of killing the bird, to place all sportsmen on an equal footing, and to remove as far as possible the influence of accident.

And now, apologizing to the many sportsmen who are abler shots and have had far greater experience than himself, the author urges in extenuation of his presumption in publishing this book, that as they would not commit their experiences to paper, he felt justified in attempting it; and as the other sporting writers have utterly neglected this field of labor as beneath their notice, he could not be blamed for entering upon it and doing with it the best of which he was capable. And to those persons who follow in the track of the literary sporting men, and affect to despise the various kinds of water-fowl and bay-shooting, the author would say that he only wishes they may have such days with the geese and ducks, the marlins, yellow-legs, and dowitchers, the rail and the plover, as he has had, in the full confidence that they will be very soon converted.

APPENDIX.

THE following technical descriptions are taken mainly from "Giraud's Birds of Long Island," a work that is now almost out of print, but which is more valuable to the student of nature than some of its more pretentious rivals; and I have interpolated such suggestions and made such alterations as my experience dictated and the purposes of this work demanded. A discourse on the wild-fowl of the Northern States hardly seemed complete without such a description of them as would enable the sportsman to distinguish one from another; and yet it was not within the purview of a work intended for sportsmen, to devote much attention or many of its pages to ornithology. This is therefore condensed into an Appendix, where it will not trouble the general reader, but will be easy of reference when the information it contains is wanted.

THE GOOSE.

Genus Anser, Briss.

Generic Distinctions.—In this class of birds, the bill is shorter than the head, rather higher than broad at the base; head small, compressed; neck long and slender; body full; feet short, stout, and

central, which enables them to walk with ease; wings long; tail short, rounded.

The Wild Goose.

Canada Goose.

Anas Canadensis, Wils.

Specific Character.—Length of bill from the corner of the mouth to the end, two inches and three-sixteenths; length of tarsi, two inches and seven-eighths; length from the point of the bill to the end of the tail, about forty inches; wing, eighteen; the head and greater portion of the neck black; cheeks and throat white. Adult with the head, greater part of the neck, primaries, rump, and tail, black; back and wings brown, margined with paler brown; lower part of the neck and under plumage, whitish-grey; flanks, darker grey; cheeks and throat white, as are the upper and under tail-coverts. The plumage of the female rather duller.

This bird is nowhere very abundant, but migrates across the Northern States in their entire breadth from ocean to ocean; it obeys the call well, and stools readily if the gunner is carefully concealed. It is the latest in its migrations of the wild-fowl.

The Brant.

Barnacle Goose—Brent Goose.

Anas Bernicla, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill black; head and neck all round black; a patch on the sides of the neck white;

upper parts brownish-grey, the feathers margined with light greyish-brown; quills and primary coverts greyish-black; fore part of breast light brownish-grey, the feathers terminally margined with greyish-white; abdomen and lower tail-coverts white; sides grey; feathers rather broadly tipped with white. Length two feet; wing fourteen inches and a half. Female rather smaller.

The brant is not fond of the fresh lakes and streams, but prefers the ocean and its contiguous bays and lagoons; it is far more abundant along the sea-coast than upon the western waters, and in fact I am not aware that I have ever killed one in the inland States. It responds to its peculiar note, stools well, and is often killed in great numbers on the South Bay of Long Island.

The Swan.

Genus Cygnus, Meyer.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill longer than the head, higher than broad at the base, depressed and a little widened towards the end; upper mandible, rounded, with the dorsal line sloping; lower mandible flattened, with the angle very long, and rather narrow; nostrils placed near the ridge; head of moderate size, oblong, compressed; neck extremely long and slender; body very large, compact, depressed; feet short, stout, placed a little behind the centre of the body; tarsi short; wings long, broad; tail very short, graduated.

The White Swan.

American Swan.

Cygnus Americanus, Aud.

Specific Character.—Plumage, pure white; bill and feet black; length of the specimen before us, four feet; wing twenty-one and a half inches.

These magnificent birds, the most majestic of the game-birds of our continent, are rarely shot to the northward and eastward of Chesapeake bay, but are much more abundant in the far West—even to and beyond the Rocky Mountains.

Fresh-Water Ducks.

Genus Anas, Linn.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill higher than broad at the base, widening towards the end, and about the same length as the head; the upper mandible with a slight nail at the end; neck rather long; body full; wings moderate, pointed; feet short, stout, and placed behind the centre of the body; walks with a waddling gait; hind toe furnished with a narrow membrane.

Mallard.

Green Head, English Duck, Grey Duck (female), the Duck, the Wild Duck.

Anas Boschas, Wils.

Specific Character.—Speculum bright purple, reflecting green, bordered with black; secondaries

broadly tipped with black; secondary coverts towards their ends white, broadly tipped with black; adult male with the entire head and upper part of the neck bright green, with a few touches of reddish-brown passing from the forehead, on the occiput; middle of the neck with a white ring; the lower part of the neck and breast reddish-brown, approaching to chocolate; fore part of the back light brown, rest of the back darker; rump black; upper tail coverts greenish-black; upper parts of the wings brown, intermixed with grey; breast, sides, flanks, and abdomen, grey, transversely barred with dusky; bill greenish-yellow; feet reddish-orange; tail rounded, consisting of sixteen pointed feathers, nearly white; speculum violet; length two feet, wing eleven inches.

Female smaller than the male; speculum less brilliant; general plumage brown; head and neck streaked with dusky; the feathers on the back and flanks margined with white, with a central spot of brown on the outer webs; bill black, changing to orange at the extremity.

This bird is abundant both at the West and along the coast, but on the fresh water it frequents the mud-holes and shallow marshes, in contradistinction to the open water-ducks that affect the broad unbroken stretches of water.

Black Duck.

Dusky Duck.

Anas Obscura, Wils.

Specific Character. — General plumage dusky; speculum green, reflecting purple, bordered with black; secondaries tipped with white. Adult with the forehead, crown, occiput, and middle space on the hind neck brownish-black, the feathers slightly margined with greyish-brown; cheeks, loral space, and sides of the neck dusky grey, streaked with black; throat reddish-brown; general plumage dusky, lighter beneath; under wing-coverts white; speculum brilliant green; bill yellowish; feet reddish-orange. Female rather smaller, plumage lighter, speculum less brilliant. Length of male about two feet; wing eleven inches.

These ducks are killed equally in the fresh and salt waters; they come to the decoys warily.

Gadwall.

Welsh Drake, German Duck.

Anas Strepera, Wils.

Specific Character.—Speculum white; secondary coverts black; upper wing-coverts chestnut red; general plumage dusky grey, waved with white; abdomen white. Adult with the bill bluish-black; head and upper part of the neck grey, streaked with dusky—darkest on the upper part of the head, as well as the middle space on the hind neck; lower

neck, upper part of the breast and fore part of the back blackish-brown, the feathers marked with semi-circular bands of white, more distinctly on the fore part of the neck and upper part of the breast; sides of the body pencilled with greyish-white and dusky; lower part of the breast and abdomen white, the latter barred with dusky towards the vent; lower and upper tail-coverts and sides of the rump greenish-black; tail greyish-brown, margined with white; hind part of the back dark brown, faintly barred with white; primaries brown; secondaries greyish-brown, tipped with white; middle coverts reddish-brown; a few of the outer secondaries broadly margined with greenish-black; inner scapulars brown, broadly margined with dull yellowish-brown; outer undulated with dark brown and yellowish-white; feet dull orange. Female two inches shorter; about four inches less in extent. Length twenty-one inches and a half; wing eleven.

This is an ugly duck, and not much esteemed by epicure or sportsman.

Widgeon.

Bald-pate.

Anas Americana, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill short, the color light greyish-blue; speculum green, banded with black; under wing-coverts white. Adult male with the loral space, sides of the head below the eye, upper part of the neck and throat, brownish-white, spotted

with black; a broad band of white, commencing at the base of the upper mandible, passing over the crown; behind the eye, a broad band of light green, extending backwards on the hind neck about three inches; the feathers on the nape rather long; lower neck and sides of the breast, with a portion of the upper part of the breast, reddish-brown; rest of the lower parts white, excepting a patch of black at the base of the tail; under tail-coverts same color; flanks brown, barred with dusky; tail greyish-brown, tipped with white; two middle feathers darker and longest; upper tail-coverts white, barred with dusky; lower part of the hind-neck and fore part of the back undulated with brownish and light brownish-red, hind part undulated with greyish-white; primaries brown; outer webs of inner secondaries black, margined with white—inner webs greyish-brown; secondary coverts white tipped with black; speculum brilliant green, formed by the middle secondaries. Length twenty-one inches, wing ten and a half. Female smaller, plumage duller, without the green markings.

This duck is much prized along the sea-coast, but at the West he holds an inferior rank.

Pintail.

Sprig-tail—Pigeon-tail—Grey-Duck.

Anas Acuta, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill long and narrow, lead color; at the tip a spot of black, at the corner of

the mouth a spot of similar color; neck long and slender; speculum bright purple, with reflecting deep green bordered with black; the feathers broadly tipped with white; tail long and pointed. Adult male with head, cheeks, throat, upper parts of the neck in front and sides, dark brown; a band of light purple behind the eye, extending about three inches on the sides of the neck; on the hind neck a band of black, with green reflections, fading as it extends on the back—a band of white commencing between the two former, passing down the neck on the lower part of the fore neck; breast and fore part of the abdomen white, tinged with pale yellow—hind part of the abdomen and vent greyish-white tinged with yellow, and marked with undulated lines of brown or dusky; at the base of the tail a patch of black; under tail-coverts black, margined with whitish; two middle feathers black, with green reflections, narrow, and about three inches longer than the rest, which are rather long and tapering; upper tail-coverts ash-grey, margined with yellowish-white, with a central streak of dusky. Rump greyish-brown, marked with undulating lines of white; sides of the rump cream color; sides of the body, back, and sides of the breast, marked with undulating lines of black and white. Primaries brown; shafts brownish-white, darker at their tips; secondaries and scapulars black, with green reflections, the former margined with grey, which is the color of the greater part of the outer web, the latter margined with white; speculum

bright purple, with splendid green reflections edged with black, the feathers broadly tipped with white. Length twenty-nine inches, wing eleven. Female with the upper part of the head and hind neck dark brown, streaked with dusky; sides of the throat and fore neck lighter; a few touches of rust color on the chin and on the base of the bill. Upper plumage brown, the feathers margined and tipped with brownish-white; lower plumage brownish-white, mottled with brown; speculum less extensive, and without the lengthened tail feathers so conspicuous in the male.

This duck is more abundant in the neighborhood of the great lakes than along the margin of the ocean; in epicurean qualities it ranks with the black duck.

Wood-Duck.

Summer-Duck.

Anas Sponsa, Aud.

Specific Character.—The pendant crest, the throat, upper portion of the fore neck, and bands on the sides of the neck white, with the speculum blue, glossed with green and tipped with white. Adult male with the bill bright red at the base, the sides yellow; between the nostrils a black spot reaching nearly to the black, hooked nail; the head is furnished with long silken feathers, which fall gracefully over the hind neck, in certain lights exhibiting all the colors of the rainbow; a narrow

white line from the base of the upper mandible, passing over the eye; a broader band of the same color behind the eye, both bands mingling with the long feathers on the occiput; throat and upper portion of the fore neck pure white, a band of the same color inclining towards the eye; a similar band on the sides of the neck, nearly meeting on the nape; lower portion of the neck reddish-purple, the fore part marked with triangular spots of white; breast and abdomen dull white; sides of the body yellowish-grey, undulated with black; the feathers towards the ends marked with a broad band of black, succeeded by a band of white; tips black; tail and upper tail-coverts greenish-black; lower tail-coverts brown; sides of the rump dull reddish-purple; rump, back, and middle portions of the hind neck, dark reddish-brown, tinged with green; a broad white band before the wings, terminating with black; lesser wing-coverts and primaries brown, most of the latter with a portion of their outer webs silvery white; the inner webs glossed with green towards the ends; secondaries tipped with white; their webs blue, glossed with green; the inner webs brown, their crowns violet-blue; secondaries black.

Female, upper part of the head dusky, glossed with green; sides of the head, upper portion of the sides of the neck, with the nape, greyish-brown; a white patch behind the eye; throat white, the bands on the sides of the neck faintly developed; fore part and sides of the neck, with the sides of the

body, yellowish-brown, marked with greyish-brown; breast and abdomen white, the former spotted with brown; lower tail-coverts greyish-white, mottled with brown; tail and upper tail-coverts dark brown, glossed with green; rump, back, and hind neck, dark brown, glossed with green and purple; bill dusky, feet dull green. The crest less than that of the male, and plain dull brown. Length twenty inches; wing eight inches and a half.

This is an extremely beautiful duck, but of moderate size; it is rare on the sea-coast, but absolutely swarms during the month of September among the lily-pads of the Western swamps. Fed upon the berry of this plant, called at the South chincapin, it becomes fat and deliciously tender. It does not pay much attention to decoys.

Green-Winged Teal.

Anas.

Anas Crecca, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill black, short, and narrow; the outer webs of the first five secondaries black, tipped with white; the next five plain rich green, forming the speculum; secondary coverts tipped with pale reddish-buff. Adult male with a dusky band at the base of the bill, of which color is the throat; a faint white band under the eye; upper part of the neck, sides of the head, and the crown, chestnut brown; a broad band of bright green commencing behind the eye, passing down on the nape,

where it is separated by the terminal portion of the crest, which is dark blue; lower part of the hind neck, a small space on the fore neck, and the sides of the body, undulated with lines of black and white; lower portion of the fore neck and upper part of the breast reddish-brown, distinctly marked with round spots of brownish-black; abdomen yellowish-white, faintly undulated with dusky; a patch of black under the tail; outer tail-feathers buff, inner white, with a large spot of black on the inner webs; tail brown, margined with whitish, the outer feathers greenish-black; upper parts brown, faintly undulated with black and white, on the fore part of the back; outer scapulars similar, with a portion of their outer webs black; lesser wing-coverts brown-ash; greater coverts tipped with reddish-cream; the first five secondaries velvety-black; the next five bright green, forming the speculum, which is bounded above by pale reddish-buff, and on each side by deep black; before the wing a transverse, broad white band.

Female smaller; head and neck streaked with brownish-white and dusky, darker on the upper part of the head; lower parts reddish-brown, the feathers margined with dusky, upper parts dusky-brown, the feathers margined and spotted with pale reddish-white, without the chestnut red and the green on the head; the black patch is wanting, as is the white band before the wings, the conspicuous spot on the wings is less extensive. Its short and narrow bill is at all times a strong specific character;

length fifteen inches; wing seven inches and a half.

This is an excellent little duck, too confiding for its own security, but capable of saving itself by great rapidity of flight. It is greatly attracted by decoys, and will generally alight among them if permitted.

Blue-Winged Teal.

Anas Discors, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill bluish-black and long in proportion with the other dimensions of this species; smaller wing-coverts light-blue; speculum purplish-green. Adult male with the upper part of the head black; a broad band of white on the sides of the head, before the eye margined with black; rest part of the head, and upper part of the neck greyish-brown, with purple reflections on the hind neck; chin black; lower parts reddish-brown; lower part of the fore neck and sides of the body spotted with blackish-brown; breast and abdomen barred with the same color; lower tail-coverts blackish-brown; tail brown, margined with paler, the feathers pointed, a patch of white on the sides of the rump; back brownish-black, glossed with green; the feathers on the fore part of the back and lower portion of the hind neck margined with yellowish-white; primaries brown; inner webs of the secondaries same color; outer vanes dark green, which form the speculum; secondary coverts brown, the outer broadly tipped with white, the inner tipped with blue; tertials dark-

green, with central markings of deep buff; feet dull yellow.

Female without the white patch on the sides of the head; throat white; lower parts greyish-brown, the feathers spotted with darker; upper parts blackish-brown, the feathers margined with bluish-white and pale buff; smaller wing-coverts blue; speculum green; secondary coverts the same as those of the male; length fourteen inches, wing seven inches and a half.

This species greatly resembles the last.

Spoonbill.

Shoveller.

Anas Clypeata, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill brownish-black, about three inches in length, near the end it is more than twice as broad as it is at the base; much rounded and closely pectinated, the size of the upper mandible at the base having the appearance of a fine-toothed comb. Adult male with the head and the neck for about half its length glossy green, with purple reflections; lower part of the neck and upper part of the breast white; rest of the lower plumage deep chestnut-brown, excepting the lower tail-coverts and a band across the vent, which is black, some of the feathers partly green; flanks brownish-yellow pencilled with black and blackish-brown; inner secondaries dark green with terminal spot of white; outer

secondaries lighter green; primaries dark brown, their shafts white, with dusky tips; lesser wing-coverts light blue; speculum golden-green; rump and upper tail-coverts greenish-black, a patch of white at the sides of the rump; tail dark brown, the feathers pointed, broadly edged with white, of which color are the inner webs of the three outer feathers.

Female with the crown dusky; upper plumage blackish-brown, the feathers edged with reddish-brown; breast yellowish-white, marked with semi-circular spots of white. Young male with similar markings on the breast; length twenty inches and a half, wing ten.

Sea-Duck.

Genus Fuligula.

Generic Distinctions.—In this class the head is rather larger, neck rather shorter and thicker, than in the preceding genus (Anas), plumage more dense, feet stronger, and the hind toe with a broad appendage, which is the principal distinction.

Canvas-Back.

Fuligula Valisneria, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill black, the length about three inches, and very high at the base; fore part of the head and the throat dusky; irides deep red; breast brownish-black. Adult male with the fore-

head, loral space, throat, and upper part of the head dusky; sides of the head, neck all round for nearly the entire length, reddish-chestnut; lower neck, fore part of the breast and back black; rest of the back white, closely marked with undulating lines of black; rump and upper tail-coverts blackish; wing-coverts grey, speckled with blackish; primaries and secondaries light slate color; tail short, the feathers pointed; lower part of the breast and abdomen white; flanks same color, finely pencilled with dusky; lower tail-coverts blackish-brown, intermixed with white; length twenty-two inches, wing nine and a quarter.

Female, upper parts greyish-brown; neck, sides, and abdomen the same; upper part of the breast brown; belly white, pencilled with blackish; rather smaller than the male, with the crown blackish-brown.

This is without question the finest duck that flies, as it is the largest and gamest; it is abundant late in the season, but wary.

Red-Head.

Fuligula Ferina, Wils.

Specific Character.—Bill bluish, towards the end black, and about two inches and a quarter long; irides yellowish-red. Adult male with head, which is rather large, and the upper part of the neck all round, dark reddish chestnut, brightest on the hind neck; lower part of the neck, extending on the

back and upper part of the breast, black; abdomen white, darker towards the vent, where it is barred with undulating lines of dusky; flanks grey, closely barred with black; scapulars the same; primaries brownish-grey; secondaries lighter; back greyish-brown, barred with fine lines of white; rump and upper tail coverts blackish-brown; tail feathers greyish-brown, lighter at the base; lower tail-coverts brownish-black, rather lighter than the upper; length twenty inches; wing nine and a half. Female about two inches smaller, with the head, neck, breast, and general color of the upper parts brown; darker on the upper part of the head, lighter on the back; bill, legs, and feet, similar to those of the male.

This duck, as it is scarcely distinguishable from the canvas-back, and has mainly the same habits, is but little inferior to that incomparable bird.

Broad-Bill.

Blue Bill, Scaup, Black Head, Raft Duck.

Fuligula Marila, Linn.

Specific Character.—The head and neck all round, with the fore part of the breast and fore part of back, black; the sides of the head and the sides and hind part of the neck dark green, reflecting purple; length of bill, when measured along the gap, two inches and five-sixteenths; length of tarsi one inch and three-eighths; length from the point of the bill to the end of the tail nineteen inches; wing eight inches and five-eighths; a broad white band crossing the secon-

daries and continues on the inner primaries. Adult male with the forehead, crown, throat, and upper part of the fore neck brownish-black; sides of the head, neck, and hind neck, dark green; lower portion of the neck all round, with the upper part of the breast, purplish-black; rest of the lower parts white, undulated with black towards the vent; under tail-coverts blackish-brown; tail short, dark brown, margined and tipped with lighter brown; upper tail-coverts and rump blackish-brown; middle of the back undulated with black and white; fore part black; wings brown, darker at the base and tips; speculum white, formed by the band crossing the secondaries and inner primaries; scapulars and inner secondaries undulated with black and white; secondary coverts blackish-brown, undulated with white. Female with a broad patch of white on the forehead; head, neck, and fore part of the breast umber brown; upper parts blackish-brown; abdomen and lower portions of breast white; scapulars faintly marked with white.

Whistler.

Golden Eye, Great Head.

Fuligula Clangula, Linn.

Specific Character.—Bill black, high at the base, where there is quite a large spot of white; head ornamented with a beautiful crest, and feathers more than an inch long and loose; insides yellow; the entire head and upper part of the neck rich glossy-green, with purple reflections, more particularly so

on the throat and forehead; rest of the neck, with the entire plumage, white; sides of the rump and vent dusky grey; tail greyish-brown; back and wings brownish-black—a large patch of white on the latter, formed by the larger portion of the secondaries and the tips of its coverts; legs reddish-orange. Length twenty inches; wing nine inches. Female head and upper part of the neck dull brown; wings dusky; lower parts white, as are six of the secondaries and their coverts; the tips of the latter dusky. About three inches smaller than the male.

Dipper.

Butter Ball, Buffel-Headed Duck, Spirit Duck.

Fuligula Albeola, Linn.

Specific Character.—Bill blue, from the corner of the mouth to the end about one inch and a half, the sides rounded, narrowed towards the point; head thickly crested, a patch behind the eye and a band on the wings white. Adult male with the plumage of the head and neck thick, and long forehead; loral space and hind neck rich glossy green, changing into purple on the crown and sides of the head; from the eye backwards over the head a triangular patch of white; the entire breast and sides of the body pure white; abdomen dusky white; tail rounded, greyish-brown; upper tail-coverts lighter; under tail-coverts soiled white; back and wings black, with a patch of white on the latter. Female upper plumage sooty-brown, with a band of white on the sides

of the head; outer webs of a few of the secondaries same color; lower part of the fore neck ash-color; breast and abdomen soiled white; tail feathers rather darker than those of the male. Male fourteen and a half inches long; wing six inches and three-fourths. Female rather smaller.

The dipper is quite plentiful everywhere in the Northern States, but not much valued.

Old Wife.

South Southerly, Old Squaw, Long-Tailed Duck.

Fuligula Glacialis, Linn.

Specific Character.—Length of bill, from the termination of the frontlet feathers to the point, one inch and one-sixteenth—the upper mandible rounded; the sides very thin; the bill rather deeply serrated, and furnished with a long nail; tail feathers acute. In the male the middle pair of tail feathers are extended about four inches beyond the next longest, which character is wanting with the female. Adult male with the bill black at the base; anterior to the nostril reddish-orange, with a dusky line margining the nail; fore part of the head white, the same color passing over the head down the hind neck on the back; eyes dark red; cheeks and loral space dusky-white, with a few touches of yellowish-brown; a black patch on the sides of the neck terminating in reddish-brown; fore neck white; breast brownish-black, terminating in an oval form on the abdomen —the latter white; flanks bluish-white; primaries

dark brown; secondaries lighter brown, their coverts black; a semicircular band of black on the fore part of the back; the outer two tail feathers white—the rest marked with brown, excepting the four acuminated feathers, which are blackish-brown, the middle pair extending several inches beyond the others. Female without the long scapulars or elongated tail feathers; bill dusky-green; head dark, greyish-brown—a patch of greyish-white on the sides of the neck; crown blackish; upper parts dark greyish-brown; lower parts white. Length of male from the point of the bill to the end of the elongated tail feathers twenty-three inches; wing eight inches and five-eighths. Female about six inches less in length.

This bird is abundant along the coast, but is generally tough and fishy.

Merganser.

Genus Mergus, Linn.

Generic Distinctions.—Bill straight, higher than broad at base; much smaller towards the end; upper mandible hooked; teeth sharp; head rather large, compressed; body rather long, depressed; plumage very thick; feet placed far behind; wings moderate, acute; tail short, rounded.

Shell-Drake.

Goosander Weaser.

Mergus Merganser, Wils.

Specific Character.—Forehead low; head rounded, crested; bill bright red, the ridge black, high at base; upper mandible much hooked. Adult male with the head and upper part of the neck greenish-black; lower portion of the neck white; under plumage light buff, delicately tinged with rose-color, which fades after death; sides of the rump greyish-white, marked with undulating lines of dusky; fore part of the back and inner scapulars glossy black; hind part of the back ash-grey; the feathers margined and tipped with greyish-white, lighter on the rump; upper tail-coverts grey, the feathers marked with central streaks of dusky; tail feathers darker; primaries dark brown; wing coverts and secondaries white, the outer webs of the latter edged with black; the basal part of the greater coverts black, forming a conspicuous band on the wings; under tail-coverts white, outer webs marked with dusky grey, which is the color of the greater part of the web; bill and feet bright red. Female with the head and upper part of the neck reddish-brown; throat and lower neck in front white; breast and abdomen deeply tinged with buff; upper parts and sides of the body ash-grey; speculum white. Length of male, twenty-seven inches; wing, ten and a half. Female about three inches smaller. Young like the female.

RULES FOR TRAP-SHOOTING

OF THE

NEW YORK SPORTSMEN'S ASSOCIATION.

RULE I. *Traps, Rise, and Boundaries.* — **All matches shall be shot from H and T plunge-traps. Rise for single birds to be twenty-one yards; and for double birds eighteen yards. The boundaries shall be eighty yards for single birds, and one hundred yards for double birds, which, in single-bird shooting, shall be measured from a point equidistant from, and in a direct line between, the two traps; in double-bird shooting from a point equidistant from, and in a direct line between, the centre-traps.**

RULE II. *Scoring.*—When a person is at the score and ready to shoot, he is to call "pull;" and, should the trap be sprung without his having given the word, or in single-bird shooting should more than one bird rise at a time, he may take the bird or birds, or not; but if he shoot, the bird or birds shall be charged to him. The party at the score must not leave it to shoot, and must hold the butt of his gun below his elbow until the bird or birds rise;

and in case of infraction of this provision, the bird or birds shall be scored as missed.

RULE III. *Rising of Birds.*—A bird must be on the wing when shot at. All contingencies from missfire, non-explosion of cap, gun not cocked, etc., etc., are at the risk of the party shooting.

RULE IV. *Recovering Birds.*—It shall be optional with the party shooting to recover his own birds, or to appoint a person for that purpose. He shall in all cases walk directly up to the bird and take it without injury; and, in case of doubt, hand it to the Judges for their decision. If a bird flies outside the bounds it shall be scored as missed. Should a bird alight upon a tree, house, or any other resting-place within the bounds, after it has been shot at, the party shooting, or his deputy, shall proceed immediately to the spot, and if the bird does not fall, without any extraneous means being used, such as throwing clods, stones, sticks, or using poles, etc., within three minutes from the time it alights, it shall be scored a miss.

RULE V. *Flight of Birds.*—In double shooting, both birds shall be on the wing when the first is shot at; if but one bird flies, and but one barrel is fired or snapped, the birds shall in no wise be scored, whether hit or missed, but the party shooting shall have two more birds; or if both birds fly and are killed with one barrel, he must shoot at two other birds.

RULE VI. *Placing the Traps.*—In single-bird shooting the distance between the traps shall be eight yards; in double-bird shooting, as four traps are used, the H and T traps shall be set alternately, and four yards apart. When five traps are used, they shall be four yards apart.

RULE VII. *Powder and Shot.*—The charge of shot shall not exceed 1¼ ounces. All the guns shall be loaded from the same charger, except in cases of breech-loaders, when the Referee may open one or more cartridges to ascertain if the charge of shot is correct.

RULE VIII. *Ties.*—In case of a tie at single birds, the distance shall be increased five yards, and shall be shot off at five birds. In case of a second tie, the distance shall again be increased five yards, and this distance shall be maintained till the match is decided. The ties in double-bird shooting shall be shot off at twenty-one yards rise without any increase, at five double rises.

RULE IX. *Judges and Referee.*—Two Judges and a Referee shall be appointed before the shooting commences. The Referee's decision shall be final; he shall have power to call "No bird," in case any bird fails to fly; and may allow a contestant another bird in case the latter shall have been baulked, or interfered with, or may, for any reason satisfactory to the Referee, be entitled to it. If a bird shall fly towards parties within the bounds, in

such a manner that to shoot at it would endanger any person, another bird may be allowed; and if a bird is shot at by any person besides the party at the score, the Referee shall decide how it shall be scored, or whether a new bird shall be allowed.

THE END.

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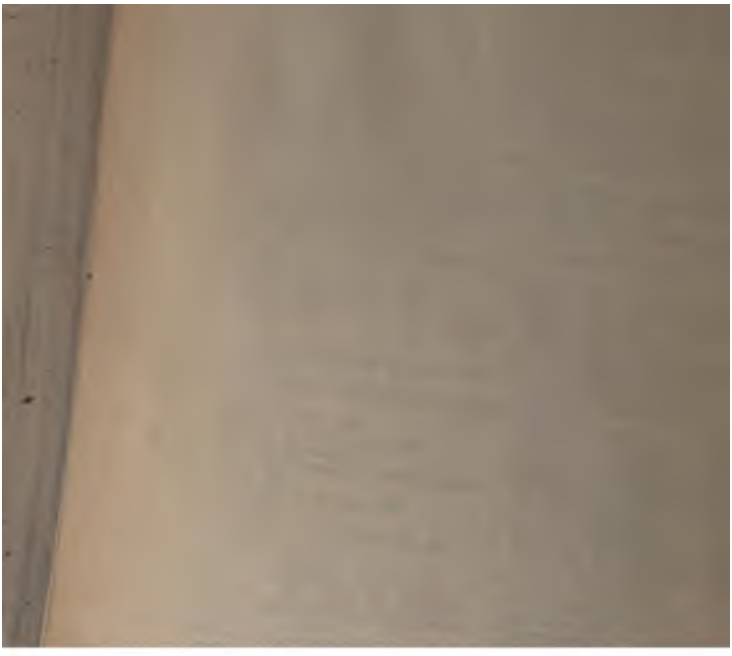

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